'X-MEN 2' SET PHOTOS

◀ Hugh Jackman as Wolverine

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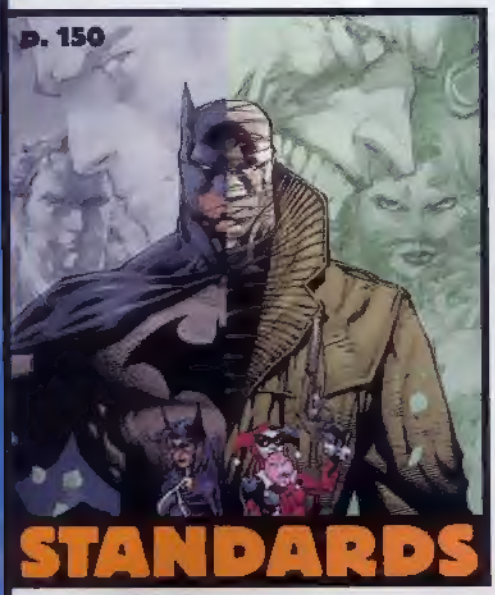

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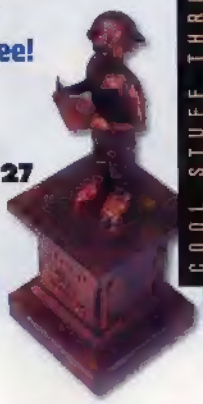
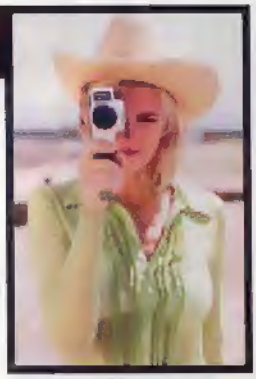


CONTEST

84 THE 4TH ANNUAL DIRECT TO VIDEO CONTEST

Want to win a free trip to Wizard World Chicago, the biggest entertainment extravaganza of the year? Then bust out your video camera and sharpen your editing skills! The winner will be the one who creates the best short film we've ever seen! Turn to **page 84** and get crackin'!



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From our very own vaults, we're offering up for sale a select group of vintage comics graded at 9.4 or higher so you can add to your collection! There's *Amazing Spider-Man* #328, featuring a Spidey/Hulk clash drawn by Todd McFarlane, or *Wolverine* #10, featuring an appearance by Sabretooth! Flip to **page 48** to order your Wizard Vintage Comics today!

MAGIC WORDS

BILL JEMAS ACTS HIS 'AGE'... SEDUCING THE INNOCENT... AND MARVEL: EVERYONE DIES!!!

Some debates just won't go away. And while we're years removed from "Iron Man vs. the X-Men," "Should Spider-Man kill?" and "Is that smell Wizard or just New Jersey?," we're still hip-deep in how and where to define the comic book ages. In fact, our first letter comes from someone who's something of an authority on the subject, and is a man respected or reviled, depending on which side of the aisle you're on.

Take it away, Little Billy Jemas...

Dear Jim,

I've read with great interest all the letters on the comic book "Ages" that have been popping up in your column. I think the past 60 years of comics are pretty easy to summarize.

• **1940 to 1980**: "A Dime at a Time," and you got what you paid for. Millions of kids were buying millions of comics. The comic creative process was incredibly fast, remarkably efficient and frequently brilliant, but for all the millions sold, those books did not hit a quality level that would fly in today's market. Jesse Owens may be the greatest athlete in history, but his foot speed wouldn't carry him to the 2002 New Jersey High School State Finals today.

• **1980-1995**: "A Case at a Time," and you got what you deserved. Millions of collectors were buying millions of comics. Comics' creative process was incredibly fast, remarkably profitable, and the artwork was frequently brilliant. But for all the millions sold, very few books were very well written. When the bloom came off of the collector rose, there was nothing to keep readers reading.

• **1995-2000**: "A Case of Brain Lock," and you got the heck out. The comic business dropped from 300 million books per year to under 100 million. Comic creativity was becoming a lost art, as most creators told stories that fit between the cracks of long-gone stories.

I think things since 2000 have been getting better. We at Marvel are leading that charge. My question: How would *you* summarize the current, post-2000 age of comics?

Bill Jemas
President, Marvel Comics

Hmmm. If anything, 2000-plus to me is, "Art Imitates Life and Vice Versa." Comics seem to be changing rapidly, always following news, culture...and other comics. When terrorism becomes a newsworthy topic, *Captain America* goes in that direction. When *The Authority* makes everyone perk up their ears, you get a dozen Authority derivatives and clones. And when a generation of little geeks becomes big geeks, there are *Transformers* comics waiting for them. That's what I'm seeing, still within that under-100-million (but slowly growing) Zip Code. Of course, there may be other opinions

TRUE or FALSE

Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada and Marvel President Bill Jemas once resolved an argument over whether or not to fire a creator by arm wrestling.

BUNNY AWARD

Wizard,

I'm the Kitchen Manager/Chef at a sports bar in Indianapolis. I'm getting ready to change my menu and have been wracking my brain for ideas. Then I thought, "Hey, why not find out what comic book creators like to eat?" Some of these guys look like they know how to eat, so they've gotta have some favorite dishes. Sandwiches? Steaks? Seafood? Burgers? Wings? What?

I'll buy dinner for the first comic book pro that submits an idea and happens to come to the Moondog Tavern in Indy.

Gary A. Swenson
Moondog Tavern
Indianapolis, IN

Yeah, great idea. 'Cause God knows that comic creator/sports bar crossover is, like, huge.

***Ultimates* writer Mark Millar steps up to the dish: "I was a vegetarian for 11 years and then decided that a wild animal wouldn't hesitate to eat me if given the chance, so I'm going to return the favor," Millar says. "Therefore, I'll go for steak in a mushroom sauce next time I'm in Indiana!"**

Mark Millar, party of one, your table is ready.

out there.

That's your cue, gentle reader.

Wizard Staff,

Anybody who thinks the Bronze Age started with any book other than *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 is wrong. This book introduced the Punisher, who started all the "grim and gritty" comics that followed.

Tim Dalbey
La Quinta, CA

See, Bill Jemas? Tim Dalbey says you're wrong!

Dear Jim,

Responding to Joe Crawford's unsuccessful attempts to find an affordable copy of *Seduction of the Innocent*, from *Wizard* #134...

I found one in the library at the University of California, San Diego. Obviously not every library is extensive enough to carry a book like that, but it certainly shows that inexpensive public copies do exist. And while this may not help out anyone seeking to purchase a copy, at least it offers some hope for anyone just trying to read the book.

Seduction was extremely instrumental in writing my own whopping 16-page research report on comic book censorship for my college English Composition course. And I got an "A," which maybe makes all those dateless Friday nights spent alone reading *Guardians of the Galaxy* all worth it.

Or not.

Matt Rossi
twinsofspace@aol.com

My money's on "not."

And for a guy who got an "A," Matt could use a little copy-editing brush-up. I found three copy errors in this letter.

Dear Jim,

Allow me to present my first annual List of Unpopular Opinions:

1) As a kid, my favorite comic was the unlikely *Excalibur*. At the risk of inviting intense ridicule, I call that series "underrated." Characters like Shadowcat and Nightcrawler, staples on *Excalibur*, are certainly popular and artist Alan Davis has also found acclaim recently.

2) The Marvel Ultimate line, while providing some entertainment, shouldn't be taken that seriously since it isn't the "real" characters. Sure, the line can mess with popular characters all they want, but the impact must be considerably less, no?

3) That drawing of Emma Frost by Frank Quitely that shows up in every issue of *Wizard* with a cheeky insert detailing how hot she looks *isn't* really that hot. I say she looks unappealing, what with the odd combination of her sexy body and old woman face.

4) CrossGen comics are interesting and all, but I think they're making a big mistake by linking all the prominent characters with the Sigil mark. It feels like an unnecessary gimmick. Imagine if Wolverine, Spider-Man, and The Avengers all had an "M" tattooed on them.

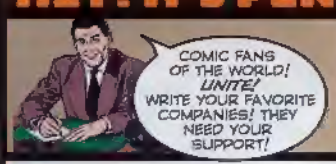
5) Here's a biggie: The "Spider-Man" flick, while decent enough, is *not* a great movie. The screenplay was loaded with unnecessary dialogue (most notably the gushy love talk of Peter Parker and Mary Jane) and Green Goblin's costume was just plain odd. For one of the best comic book movies, look rather to 2000's "Unbreakable."

6) Finally, and maybe this will make my above proclamations understandable, I don't drink beer. I just don't like the taste.

Peter Muhvic
vertigowindow@yahoo.com

It takes a lotta guts to post your Unpopular Opinions for hundreds of thousands to see. For your intestinal fortitude, I salute you, Peter Muhvic. That having been said...

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...



Like a title? Hate a character? Just have something to say? Then write your favorite comic company and let 'em know what you're thinking. Send your thoughts to the following addresses, but be sure to send your letters in care of a particular book or editor. Power to the people!

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1) I do not feel it necessary to ridicule you intensely at this juncture. I have faith the Geeks of America (and other assorted countries) will do a fine job all by their lonesomes.

2) Or maybe you're just saying that 'cause the "regular" Marvel heroes are all you've ever known, and that's just an accident of birth. Marvel President Bill Jemas (him again?) draws this parallel: "Next time you find yourself in an argument with a religious fundamentalist, ask him or her, 'But what if you were born into a different faith? Wouldn't you feel just as strongly as to the absolute truth of *that* faith?' If your fundamentalist friend is honest, he will say 'yes.' I only wish that comic *fan*dementalists were different."

3) Agreed. Overrated.

4) To their credit, they've veered away from that a bit. There is nary a Sigil to be found in *Ruse*, for example.

5) Call me crazy, but I *liked* the romance aspect of the flick. The superhero-y stuff was, by comparison, boring. But yeah, I'll give you that the Green Goblin costume (and mask in particular) was pretty silly looking.

6) Heathen!

Dear Jim,

1) How does one pitch a script idea to Kevin Smith?

2) And when can we expect to see a Jim McLauchlin action figure? Oh, and the Jim love doll I've seen for sale on all those pop-up windows doesn't count.

Chris Wisdom
thechris69@hotmail.com

1) Simply put, one does not. Smith, and ALL members of the Writer's Guild of America, does not look at others' scripts unless it's for a specifically contracted job. The issue is liability. If, sake of argument, you had a character called "Chris Wisdom" in a script that a WGA member looked at, and years later another script by that writer had a character by the same name, well, you could build a case that said writer stole your idea. Can't happen.

Your recourse? Call the WGA. They're in the phone book. They can help you register and protect your script. Then get a lawyer and an agent, and get a .0001% chance of actually getting your script somewhere. It's a longshot, but *everyone* has to start somewhere.

2) Maybe 2004 or so. Maybe. The aforementioned Kevin Smith has a line of "Clerks Inaction Figures" debuting in 2003 from Graphitti Designs, and KS has plans to do up to 75 characters from his movies, including "Clapper/Loader" from "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back," played by noted thespian Jim McLauchlin. "'Clapper Loader' would have to be the *ToyFare* or *Wizard* exclusive figure, though," Smith notes. "That would be the most appropriate exclusive figure ever."

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QUICK HITS

THE READERS STRIKE BACK!

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Hocoo-leee crap in a hat! "The Ultimate Move," *Wizard* #135's article on possibly making the entire Marvel Universe the Ultimate Universe drew so many letters, we've got an entire Quick Hits-full of it this month! –JMcL]

"I know you've probably heard it before, but why not say it again? 'Ultimatizing' Marvel is, indeed, blasphemy!"

—Travis Seifman, Waltham, MA

"How you squeezed 10 items out of 'The Ultimate Move' with thin arguments and support is beyond me. At best, this list was a 'Top 4 Reasons to Ultimatize Marvel.'"

—Gregor Mundi, gregormundi@yahoo.com

"How about some equal time? Maybe an article listing the 10 reasons why Marvel should NOT 'Ultimate-ize' its entire universe? "

—David Hofstede, Henderson, NV

"Some Ultimate titles are already at #20. Oh no! The number is too high! Lets cancel it, give the characters some chin hair and bad attitudes, and call it The Definite Ultimate Marvel."

—Moyer Hall Jr., New Orleans, LA

"If I felt I needed old storylines, they're there in the back issue bins. Once characters age, you need to stop, take a deep breath, and start from scratch. That's what comics are all about. That's 'Ultimates.'"

—Andy Trello, Springfield, IL

"Sorry, but punk rock Jean Grey and Russian mobster Peter Rasputin are not *my* X-Men. 'Ultimates' is not *my* Marvel Universe."

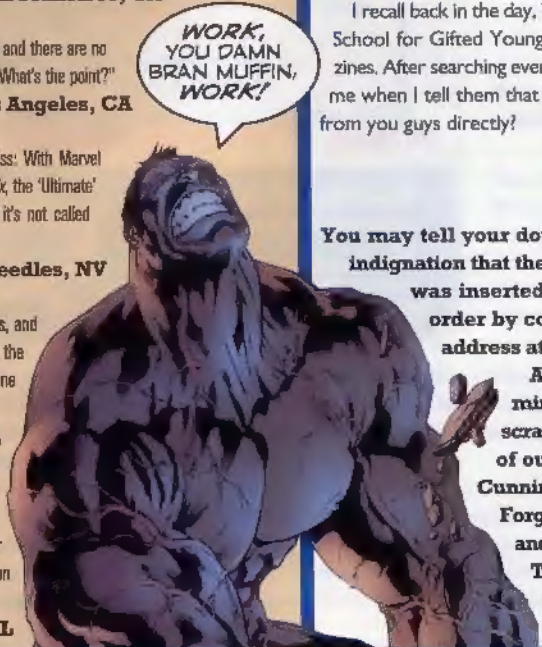
—Bobbi Halvorson, Hudson, WI

"It's just pointless! If you 'Ultimatize' all of Marvel, 18 years from now you just 'Ultimate Ultimatize' it and the cycle never ends."

—Peter Hanspard, San Francisco, CA

"'Ultimates' is lazy. When the controls are off and there are no rules, anyone can do anything. It's all cheap. What's the point?"

—Joseph Noblick, Los Angeles, CA



"One point I'm sure a lot of people will miss: With Marvel relaunches such as *Blade*, *Cage*, and *X-Statix*, the 'Ultimate' Marvel Universe is everywhere, even when it's not called 'Ultimate.' Live with it."

—Keon Francis, Needles, NV

"James Bond has been around for 40 years, and I don't have to know 'Goldfinger' to enjoy the new Bond movie. 'Ultimate' Marvel is just fine by me."

—Malu Tapupu, Spokane, WA

"Dear *Wizard*, I love you. But I also hate you. There. I just summed up 75 percent of your letters. Probably most of which were on 'Ultimizing Marvel.'"

—Charlie Schmidlin, Elgin, IL

Jimmy,

George Romero's trilogy of "Dead" movies ("Night of the Living Dead," "Dawn of the Dead" and "Day of the Dead") are classics on most anyone's list, and the story involved is incredibly interesting. I always thought this world and setting would make an *awesome* comic series. Imagine the last band of humans in a world overrun by zombies! Are the comic rights for this owned by any company? What sayest thou?

And also, what have Paul Chadwick of *Concrete* fame and Jim Starlin of All Things Cosmic been up to lately? They're two of my all-time favorite creators, yet it seems like we haven't seen hide nor hair of them lately.

Jeremy Bellor
jbellor@chartermi.net

The "Dead" movies are a very sticky wicket. Fantaco did some *Dead* comics back in 1996-97, but the licensing rights are chopped up and difficult. Getting a "Dawn of the Dead" license might not get you access to characters from "Day of the Dead" and so on. No comic publisher currently wants to touch it.

Paul Chadwick is busy as the proverbial beaver. Primarily, he's hip-deep in his next *Concrete* series, *The Human Dilemma*, a six-issue opus coming from Dark Horse in mid-2003. He's also drawing a Star Wars one-shot written by Judd Winick about Han Solo and Princess Leia and writing a *Darklighter* one-shot about "Star Wars" bit player Biggs Darklighter.

Jaunty Jim Starlin is returning to his favorite standby: mass carnage. Starlin will write and pencil *The End*, a six-issue Marvel mini-series in March that, quite literally, kills everyone. Unlike other Marvel "End" books, Starlin assures us that this "is in regular continuity, and will have a consequence that everyone will have to deal with."

Hey, Yo,

I recall back in the day, *Wizard* offered a diploma from the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters as an insert in one of your magazines. After searching everywhere, I can't find it, and no one believes me when I tell them that it existed. Is there anyway I can order it from you guys directly?

Mike Fuentes
dogzofwar@msn.com

You may tell your doubting friends with all righteous indignation that the X-diploma does indeed exist and was inserted in *Wizard* #83. It's available for order by contacting the "customer service" address at the end of this here column.

And for those of you interested in mind-numbing trivia, the "signatures" scrawled on the diploma come courtesy of our esteemed editor, Young Brian Cunningham. He is the semi-official "Mr. Forgery O. Handwriting" around here, and provides most all faked signatures. The "Matthew M. Green" signed on the diploma was named after a buddy of Bri's, just for laughs.

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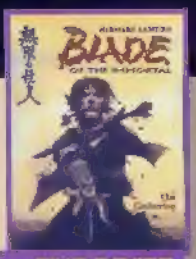


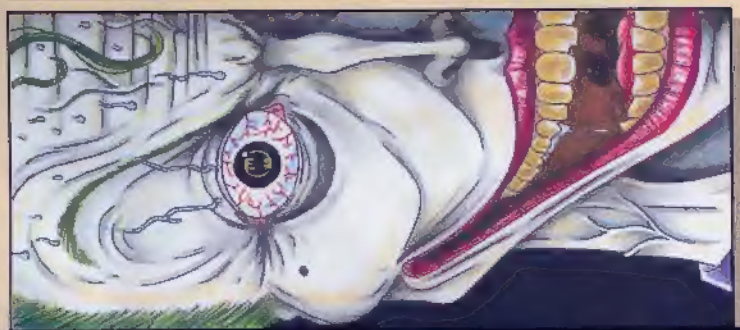
The mega-talented creator of this month's best envelope takes home a copy of *Blade of the Immortal: The Gathering* trade paperback (coincidentally enough!), courtesy of Dark Horse Comics! Those guys are so cool for donating their stuff, we owe them bigger than the immortal Manji owes the local seamstress for sewing him back together all those times! Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of the envelope.

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

MANJI, IMMORTAL SAMURAI, Mike Brown, Cincinnati, OH

THE FLASH, Stephen Ruby, Ludlow, VT

THE WRECKING BULLIES, John Lovett, Rockaway Park, NY



THE JOKER, Leandro Hegoahl, Baldwin Park, CA

Kon'wa Jim,

Just wanted to know one thing: Are they thinking about making "Free Comic Book Day" an annual thing?

Michelle Stoliker
Allentown, PA

Yup. Free Comic Book Day 2 will be on May 3, 2003, timed to coincide with the "X-Men 2" movie.

I'm pushing to make Free Comic Book Day 3 on April 7, 2004, my birthday. Fans will get free comics and all comic stores will be obligated to give me a free pie.

Wizard,

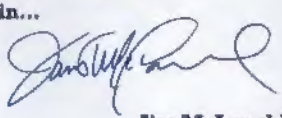
Wasn't there a "Savage Dragon" cartoon show on the USA Network? Will it ever be collected on DVD?

Trevor Reece
Eureka, CA

There was a "Savage Dragon" cartoon, and despite its less-than-memorable qualities, there has actually been talk about releasing all 26 episodes on DVD. "It seems likely that I'll do new cover art for the DVDs, and maybe even—if you can believe it—audio commentary," says *Savage Dragon* creator Erik Larsen. "That alone would make it well worth the price of admission."

Larsen was none too fond of the cartoon, but is looking forward to commenting on it. "Ought to be fun," he says. "In a 'Mystery Science Theater 3000' kind of way."

That be that. Get out of my house. I'll be back in 30 days. Until then, I remain...



—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin is bringing "Moby Dick" to Broadway, where he'll play Captain Ahab and Carvel's Fudgie the Whale ice cream cake will play the elusive white beast.

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X 'MARCS' THE SPOT

Silvestri to team with Morrison in return to 'X-Men'

Marc Silvestri is all set to celebrate his 10-year reunion—at the Xavier School for Gifted Children.

Marvel and Top Cow have brokered a deal that will bring the Image founder back to the Merry Mutants that helped launch his career, as he illustrates a four-issue run of *New X-Men* with writer Grant Morrison this summer, stepping in for the rotating team of Frank Quitely and Phil Jimenez.

SILVESTRI

One of the most popular artists to ever tackle Marvel's genetically challenged superheroes, Silvestri's run on *Uncanny X-Men* was a visual renaissance that not only ushered in the darker X-tales of the late '80s, but also maintained the success of the X-Men as comics' premier franchise. With a résumé that boasts work on storylines like "Inferno," "The Fall of the Mutants" and the *X-Men vs. Avengers* miniseries, the artist's haunting renditions of villains such as Mr. Sinister and super-sexy females like Storm and Rogue define him as one the most popular X-artists of all time—rivaling John Byrne, Jim Lee and Joe Madureira.

"I've always had a soft spot for the X-Men," said Silvestri. "And I've wanted to work with Grant Morrison, so this is a perfect opportunity to tell some great stories. [Marvel Editor-in-Chief] Joe Quesada and I have always talked about doing something together and when he approached me about this, I thought it would be a great."

The project has been a long time in the making, as Top Cow and Marvel sought a way for Silvestri to return to the

Silvestri: Paul Gilchrist

CROSS TO BEAR All eyes will be on Marc Silvestri when he returns to the X-Men this summer.

House of Ideas. Previous rumors had linked Silvestri and writer Brian Michael Bendis (*Daredevil*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*) to a possible "Secret Wars III" event. While nothing initially materialized, Silvestri's return to Marvel has now been cemented, although a storyline and definitive issue number for the project have yet to be agreed upon.

While Silvestri has to finish up *Evo* and other commitments before jumping on the X-wagon, Marvel's Editor-In-Chief can't hide his enthusiasm.

"Are you kidding?" exclaimed Quesada. "Who wouldn't be excited about this? This team-up with Morrison is going to be unprecedented in the history of comics. Two greats teaming up at their very peak!"

As part of the deal which will see Top Cow founder Silvestri doing work for Marvel, Top Cow will be granted the use of any character in the Marvel Universe—with the exception of Spider-Man—to appear in two separate crossovers. A tentative date of Fall 2003 has been established for the first Top Cow/Marvel crossover; however, specific characters or creative teams have yet to be finalized, but smart money's riding on comics' most famous Canadian.

"Obviously, Wolverine would be a safe bet," said Top Cow President Matt Hawkins. "But nothing's been nailed down. It's possible that we may even use one of Marvel's female characters for one of these crossovers."

While this deal may seem to be a no-brainer from a business perspective, the creative end is what has Quesada excited.

"I remember when I was breaking in, Marc was one of those guys who I truly admired," recalled Quesada. "Just a tremendous draftsman whose style grew and changed every year. Like all great artists of their time, Marc's style continues to get better. Give me a Silvestri Wolverine, baby!"

■ JAMES McDONOUGH

TOY SHOPPING

TOP COW, PALISADES TEAM UP ON TOY LINE

Top Cow's springing into action in 2003. Action figures that is.

The California-based comics publisher has entered into a deal with Palisades Toys to produce action figures based on the newly developed Myth Warriors property. Also planned is a Top Cow comic and the possibility of an animated series.

Created by Top Cow President Matt Hawkins and collaborator Robert Napton (*Alley Cat*), the basic premise for Myth Warriors is best described as a little bit Power Rangers, a little bit Transformers with a touch of Aladdin.

"These six teens uncover sigils that allow them to transform into these huge kick-ass anime-style mechs," explained Hawkins.

The young warriors are thrust headfirst into a centuries-long conflict between two alien races that have used Earth as a battleground through various periods of history.

"Throughout history, these aliens have controlled parts of the Earth," revealed Hawkins. "And you see that influence in the various mechs' designs. Now the bad guys have returned and Earth needs new champions."

ANUBIS

And while the names of the aliens have yet to be nailed down, the good guys will supply our heroes with mechs based on mythological figures such as Thor, Goliath, Venus and Electra with the bad guys mimicing Egyptian deities such as Anubis, Osiris and Thoth.

The first wave of toys, which is tentatively scheduled for a third or fourth quarter release, will consist of four highly detailed mech toys that includes heroes Thor and Valkyrie and villains Anubis and Thoth. Tying into the toyline will be an all-new ongoing series with pencils by Alvin Lee (upcoming *ThunderCats/Battle of the Planets* crossover) and a writer to be determined. Top Cow is so confident in the property that they will begin shopping it around as a possible animated series.

"It's the perfect fit," said Hawkins. "Just imagine seeing [Anubis] ripping apart downtown L.A." ■ JMcD

THE BUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

GETTING INTO 'GEAR' As licensed properties continue to dominate the comic landscape (see everything from *Masters of the Universe* to *Transformers*), more publishers are looking the licensing way. Rumored to be next up at bat? Comics based on the video games *Devil May Cry* and *Metal Gear Solid*.

DON'T GET MAD Even though TriLunar, Joe Madureira's video game development company, has bitten the dust, don't expect to see the Mad man back in comics–he's been snapped up by another video game developer. The former comics superstar says that while there's no paperwork contractually preventing him from doing comics, no return is planned.

MADUREIRA

COM.X ROBBED During a business trip to L.A., Com.X Comics employees learned that the London-based publisher was the victim of a burglary in which several computers were stolen and a vast majority of upcoming comics were damaged or completely destroyed.

UNKNOWN ART Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale recently uncovered an eight-page *Challengers of the Unknown* story that was completed nearly a decade ago. The story was to originally appear as a back-up feature in *Justice League International*, but after the series was cancelled, the story got the ax and was lost until recently.

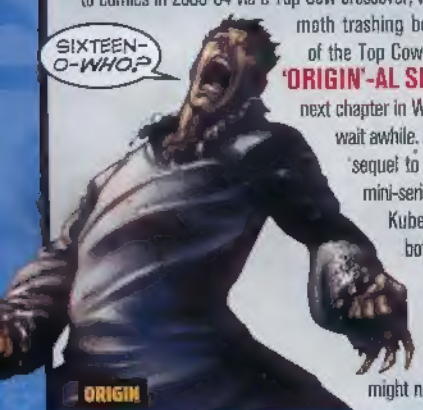
SUPER TEAM? Based on the success of Jim Lee and Jeph Loeb's *Batman*, rumor has it DC has now been courting two superstar creators to take over *Superman*–namely Grant Morrison and Bryan Hitch.

BRUSHING UP Refusing to look like a poser, writer/artist Kaare Andrews (*The Incredible Hulk* covers) has dug deep into his pockets to purchase every "Battle of the Planets" DVD and "ThunderCats" episode in order to make sure his version of the '80s mega-crossover remains true to its roots.

KNIGHT MOVES Don't be surprised if there are massive changes in the Marvel Knights line in 2003. With *Elektra* returning to the mainstream Marvel Universe, look for all Marvel Knights' titles to move to a PG+ rating and less friendly neighborhood characters to take up residence there.

GATCHA In *Battle of the Planets* news, Top Cow plans to release a series based on the "G-Force" incarnation of "Gatchaman" (the Japanese name for *BotP*) in late 2003.

PITT HAPPENS Dale Keown's overgrown alien bruiser Pitt may return to comics in 2003-04 via a Top Cow crossover, which has the chiseled behemoth trashing both the heroes and villains of the Top Cow Universe.



'ORIGIN'-AL SEQUEL Fans waiting for the next chapter in Wolverine's origin may have to wait awhile. Although Marvel is planning a sequel to the highly successful *Origin* mini-series, the *Origin* art team of Andy Kubert and Richard Isanove are both hip deep in Neil Gaiman's *1602* project. According to Marvel, *Origin 2* won't begin until the entire creative team can be reunited–and that might not be until 2004!

OOPS

A news story about Free Comic Book Day 2 in *Wizard* #136 should have stated that the percentage of retailers who voted for the event to be held on the opening weekend of "X-Men 2" was 63.5 percent while 36.5 percent voted for the opening weekend of "The Hulk."

SPIDEY DVD SECRETS

Spider-sense tingling...there's something unusual about the "Spider-Man" DVD. But fear not True Believers, it's not a Green Goblin pumpkin attack, just a boatload of hidden extras on the record-selling DVD!

GOBLIN & SPIDEY DOING AEROBICS

DISC ONE

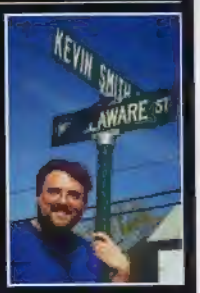
- In the "Commentaries" section, click on Harry Osborn's picture to launch a reel of CGI gags, including Spider-Man and Green Goblin doing aerobics, Spidey racing on rooftops "Pac-Man" style and a big-headed Spider-Man brawler.
- In "Character File," circle an actor's name to see his/her filmography. Then click on the actor's name to get a character rundown, complete with statistical information (height, weight, first comic appearance) and comic illustrations. In the spirit of the character, the link for Uncle Ben is dead.

DISC TWO

- In "Rogue's Gallery," choose either Venom, Scorpion or Electro and press the down button to expose a silhouette that triggers a full-screen 3-D version of the villain.
- Also in "Rogue's Gallery," press the up button until you reach Spidey's spider-sense highlights. Press play to uncover a page of stats and photos of the Sinister Six.
- In the DVD-ROM portion, press the up button to reveal a hidden Spider-Man icon that activates a clip of Todd McFarlane waxing poetic about Spidey's webs.
- In "Evolution of Spider-Man," move the icon to "Artist's Gallery." Press the right button to see "The Romitas," a feature on the two generations of Spidey artists, John Sr. and Jr.
- In the "Comic Book Artist Gallery," go to the Terry Dodson sketch and press the up button on the camera icon to expose a link to a gallery full of famous Spider-Man covers redrawn with the movie costumes and actors. ■ **DAVE MARSHALL**

KEVIN SMITH 'WAY'

New Jersey filmmaker gets road in his honor



Throw away your old New Jersey maps. An important change has been made.

The former Tyler Street in Paulsboro, N.J. has been renamed "Kevin Smith Way" in honor of filmmaker and Jersey native Kevin Smith. Some scenes from Smith's new flick, "Jersey Girl," were shot in Paulsboro.

"I couldn't help but feel what a weird life I lead," Smith remarked when he heard that the mayor of Paulsboro wanted to make the change. "I was really flattered and appreciative, but c'mon–me? What'd I ever do to be worthy of having a street named after me? A fat camp, maybe." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

Underwriter Press Products

STAN LEE HAS HIS EYE ON 'HOUSE' MONEY

Stan Lee's always gotten credit and respect for creating the Marvel Universe. Now the 79-year-old comics legend wants the money, too.

Stan Lee, Marvel Comics' chairman emeritus and the co-creator of characters such as the X-Men, Hulk and Spider-Man, has filed suit against Marvel claiming the publisher has embarked on a "shameful scheme" to deprive the writer of profits from Marvel's top grossing movies and television programs such as the recent "Spider-Man" and "X-Men" films.

Claiming that Marvel has "trampled upon" his rights, Lee filed suit in Manhattan federal court in November, seeking 10 percent of Marvel's profits earned from the publisher's recent string of hit films, which he believes could total at least $20 million.

Prior to the filing of the suit, Marvel dismissed the claim as groundless, noting that Marvel currently pays Lee an annual salary of $1 million.

Lee is also seeking a share of the profits from toys and other merchandise based on his characters and maintains Marvel is now refusing to honor an agreement which the creator claims promises him 10 percent of all Marvel's profits from film and television, now that Marvel has "hit the jackpot" with "Spider-Man."

Neither Lee nor Marvel would comment on the pending case. ■ MIKE COTTON

COMMUNITY RALLIES TO AID CREATOR

William Messner-Loebs knows that comics' real heroes don't wear spandex.

Colleagues and lifelong fans came to the rescue of the 53-year-old creator with auctions, fundraisers and a benefit anthology when the bank evicted him and his wife Nadine from their Michigan home last summer.

When the late '90s brought cutbacks to all the major publishers, Messner-Loebs found himself unable to find work despite 27 years of industry experience as DC's writer of choice for *The Flash*, *Wonder Woman* and *Hawkman* in the early '90s.

While ACTOR, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing financial assistance to veteran comics creators, stepped in with a donation to cover short-term living expenses, creators and fans began fundraising efforts. Artist Steve Lieber auctioned off original art from his *Hawkman* run. There was even a "rent party" in Seattle with live music and an opportunity to buy rare comics paraphernalia from Fantagraphics.

Available for purchase and download at **unboundcomics.com**, anthology editor John Roberson's 135-page e-book features over 25 contributors, including Steve Bissette (*Swamp Thing*), Sam Kieth (*The Maxx*) and P. Craig Russell (*Sandman*).

Donations can be mailed to: Bill & Nadine Messner Loebs, P.O. Box 558, Pinckney, MI 48169-0058. Checks or money orders should be paid to the order of William F. Loebs. ■ DM

NEWSFLASHES

GOLDEN AGE BATMAN In January, *Hopeless Savages* writer Jen Van Meter hooks up with penciller Cliff Chiang (*Josie Mac*) for the Elseworlds one-shot *Batman: The Golden Streets of Gotham*. *Golden Streets* finds a young Bruce Vanekow's parents killed in a mysterious factory explosion in the first decade of the 20th century, and the newly orphaned young man assumes the mantle of the Bat to try and uncover who was behind the deed.

THE GOLDEN STREETS OF GOTHAM

MAGGY AND VAMPI Two Dew Productions' assassin-for-the-Vatican returns in *The Magdalen* [illegible] launching in May. Brian Holguin (*Spawn*) writes [illegible] (*Darkness*). And look for a *Vampirella/Magdalena* [illegible] (*Witchblade*) with art by Jae Benitez (*Weapon Zero*) the same month.

UNLUCKY CAT Crime buffs looking for something a little bit lighter should check out [illegible] Comics. The four-issue mini-series follows the misadventures of a bungling cat burglar whose misfortunes take a slight turn for the better when he befriends a black cat named Lucky.

OPTIMAL OPTIMUS Transformers wannabes, for ever next to should keep their optics peeled for Dreamwave's *Optimus Prime* mini-series by Chris Sarracini (*GI*) and James Raiz (*Armada*) in May. The five-issue mini-series features a young Autobot leader on an intergalactic [illegible] self-discovery as he travels to distant planets searching for the meaning of a true warrior.

GOLDEN PANEL AWARDS The New York [illegible] Golden Panel Awards and Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee was selected "Legend of 2002" for his lifetime achievements in the comic book field. Other recipients included Jim Lee (*Batman*), Brian Michael Bendis (*Ultimate Spider-Man*) and Bruce Jones (*Hulk*).

CHARACTER TO WATCH

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

After a heated bidding war among several comic publishers, Dark Horse secured the license to publish comics starring Robert E. Howard's classic character, Conan. Dark Horse plans to launch a Conan ongoing series in mid-2003 (no creative team attached yet). Rumor has it Dark Horse also plans to reprint and collect classic issues of *Conan*, similar to their recent Marvel *Star Wars* reprints.

"I'm very honored and excited to bring this classic character back to the comics world," said Dark Horse President Mike Richardson. "We will be working closely with Fredrik Malmberg of Conan Properties to ensure the highest quality stories and art to do this legendary character justice."

HEAT INDEX

No one loves comics like *Wizard*, so here's some cool things we read and saw this month.

THE SPIDER WASP (Marvel Comics) J. Michael Straczynski concocted a terrifying addition to Spider-Man's rogues gallery in *ASM* #46 with Shathra, a.k.a. the Spider Wasp, a bizarre, other-dimensional insect being who wants to "play" with Spidey till she gets bored, then feed him to her young! With lightning speed, devastating strength and an acerbic tongue, Shathra could be the best new Spider-villain since Venom.

HAWKMAN #9 (DC Comics) In addition to a kick-ass guest appearance by the enigmatic Dr. Fate (a.k.a. Hawkman's son), this story revealed secrets about Hawkman and Hawkgirl's past–including a traumatic event that radically shaped HG's life–and ended with the Hawks getting a message from an old enemy in the form of a dead Yeti! That's abominable!

ULTIMATE DAREDEVIL & ELEKTRA #1 (Marvel Comics) This new mini-series by Greg Rucka (*Queen & Country*) got us ramped up for the upcoming "DD" flick! In this Ultimate retelling, see how Matt Murdock (Daredevil) and Elektra Natchios fall in love at Columbia University–and the shocking event that could turn the burgeoning lovers into mortal enemies!

MARVEL HEROCLIX WAVE II (WizKids) With new figures including the Red Skull, Hawkeye, the Super-Skrull and the entire Fantastic Four, Marvel's Wave I *HeroClix: Clobberin' Time* figures let fans create amazing teams including an almost perfect Avengers, X-Men or Brotherhood of Evil Mutants squad. Add in an army of Doombots led by Dr. Doom himself and this set packs some serious firepower.

VERTIGO POP!: LONDON #1 (DC/Vertigo): Pete Milligan and Philip Bond's chapter of the *Vertigo Pop!* anthology blew us away. Just like an episode of VH1's "Behind the Music" (only better!), this fun story about a washed-up rock star who switches bodies with a young, handsome street performer had us laughing and throwing up the devil horns with every page. *Rock on!*

ZERO GIRL: FULL CIRCLE (DC/Homage): Sam Kieth's anxiously awaited follow-up to *Zero Girl* was worth the wait. Amy Smootster has been transformed from an awkward, insecure teenager into, well, an awkward yet cute-as-hell adult with a lingering crush on her former go-dance counselor Tim Foster. Foster's daughter harbors a crush on Smootster, creating a riveting–and titillating–love triangle!

DEVIL MAY CARE In the distant future, a mind-killing force known only as the Gauntlet has taken over the world. It's explosive, it's deadly...and it's called Gauntlet Kicking off in January, Dark Horse will reprint the classic *Gauntlet: God and the Devil* storyline, starting with issue #0, written by Gauntlet creator Matt Wagner with art by Tom Fowler (*Spider-Man: Chapter One*). Matt says the book has a mixture of the fantasy elements found in the video game and the "hard-boiled, noir-ish feel of the comic books and crime novels that I love," and the consequences that follow their addiction.

SIMON SAYS Joe Simon, co-creator of Captain America, has appealed over the character's ownership ruling and won a [illegible] victory by Marvel, and gives Simon the grounds to pursue [illegible] on the copyright.

MONSTERS, INC. Hot on the heels of their [illegible] *Days of Night*, writer Steve Niles and artist Ben Templesmith team up once again for an all-new, [illegible] *Calling All Monsters: A Cat Mattheus Supernatural Mystery* from Dark Horse Comics. [illegible] paranormal detective Cal Mattheus, who you may recognize from Niles' *Savage Dragon* arc, is hired on a [illegible] case in Los Angeles.

GREEN TEAM Earth's greatest [illegible] Hal Jordan, is joining up with the JLA [illegible] Kicking off in January, *JLA/The Spectre* sees the Spectre [illegible] Hal to take on a psychic entity. [illegible] Ongoing *Spectre* writer J.M. DeMatteis teams with penciler Cheryl Rubin (*Bruce Lambert, Inc.*) for this two-issue, prestige format mini-series.

NEW GENERATION John Byrne offers up [illegible] of his popular Elseworlds version of the DCU in *Generations II*. Another [illegible] Generations [illegible] throughout millennia as [illegible] Earth's two [illegible]

ROCKET LAUNCH

So what does Dark Horse plan to do to the comic industry in 2003?

Just like Def Leppard, they're gonna "rocket!"

Kicking off in Summer 2003, Dark Horse rocks the comic industry with Rocket Comics an all-new line of high-concept, character-driven, action-adventure titles. The publisher plans to kick off the new venture with four books, with two more in the works scheduled for a late 2003 release.

Known for a healthy manga line, gritty independent-style books and some of the biggest licensed comics, Dark Horse felt that adding a line of high-octane action titles was a natural progression.

"We created Rocket Comics as our launch pad for high-energy adventure stories," said Line Editor Dave Land. "These books focus on strong characters who exist in extreme situations, but who, at their core, are just like the people reading their stories."

Rocket Comics blasts off with these four titles:

DARK HORSE UNVEILS NEW LINE OF SUPERHERO COMICS

TITLE	60 BOY 7	LONE	SYN	HELL
CREATIVE TEAM	Tom Peyer (w), Joe Sommariva (p), [illegible]	Stuart Moore (w), Jerome Opeña (p), [illegible]	Keith Giffen (w), Greg Tit[illegible] (p), [illegible]	Brian Augustyn (w), Skottie Young (p), [illegible]
RELEASE DATE	[illegible] 2003	June 2003	[illegible] 2003	[illegible] 2003
THE SCOOP	After a near fatal air [illegible] crash [illegible], [illegible] saved by the scientist [illegible] who injects him with nano-tech robots that [illegible] repair the damage. However the nano-tech bots can't stop the repair [illegible] process and con[illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] with energy. What he must use or else he will [illegible]	A five-issue [illegible] series [illegible] coming. Marvel vet Moore takes the Wild West and throws it [illegible] to a [illegible] post apocalyptic setting in which Lone, the mysterious Man with No Name [illegible] [illegible] and other unspeakable horrors.	In a [illegible] future where humanity has been [illegible] by machines a robot bounty hunter finds itself on the [illegible] [illegible] zombies [illegible] forbidden knowledge regarding the history of the world [illegible] what it means to humanity	Corey Rollins father [illegible] when he was [illegible] but now Corey's all grown up and he finally wants to [illegible] absence. His search leads him to a bizarre island inhabited by [illegible] [illegible] experiments gone wrong and tribes of otherworldly beings
THINK	[illegible] xXx	Unforgiven meets Mad Max	Planet of the Apes meets AI	A hip hop Jonny Quest meets "The Island of Dr Moreau"

JOHNS ASSEMBLES DC 'ALL-STAR' TEAM

It took a workload of four monthly titles and countless mini-series, but Geoff Johns has finally admitted he needs professional help.

On his upcoming eight-issue mini-series *JSA: All Stars*, Johns, *JSA* co-plotter David Goyer and Editor Pete Tomasi have enlisted the industry's biggest names to offer all-new stories starring DC's first and finest superteam, with issue #1 scheduled to ship in May.

"This was something David Goyer and I always wanted to do," explained Johns. "There's so many characters in the book, and we could only do so many Mr. Terrific solo stories in *JSA* without people going, 'Well, where's the rest of the team?' So we decided to do this mini-series."

Just like the classic Golden Age issues of *All Star Comics*, *All-Stars* will feature eight-page back-up stories starring classic versions of current JSAers written and penciled by premiere creative duos. Fans can look forward to work from the likes of Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale (who will do a Hawkman eight-pager), Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso (Dr. Mid-Nite), Howard Chaykin (Hourman), James Robinson and Tony Harris (Starman), Darwyn Cooke (Dr. Fate) and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon and Michael Lark (Mr. Terrific).

Each back-up story will tie into the others, as well as the overall story written by Johns, Goyer and a rotating cast of penciliers, which takes up the first 16 pages of each issue.

"You can take the Dr. Mid-Nite story and give it to somebody who's never read *JSA* or a Dr. Mid-Nite story and they can read it like a stand-alone story," said Johns. "But when you put all of them together, there's an actual storyline."

All-Stars finds Johns doing what he does best—revamping villains, introducing new ones and serving up thought-provoking, action-laden superhero tales.

"The new Injustice Society shows up in issue #1 with new members like Rag Doll and Solomon Grundy, as well as a new villain named Legacy," hinted Johns. "By the end of the issue, the JSA characters have to prepare themselves mentally and revisit their pasts and try and make peace with it. So each issue sort of deals with them re-examining who they are and where they come from." ■ CASEY SELWAS

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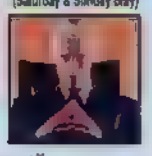
(Sunday only)

Dina Meyer
Barbara Gordon/Oracle of "Birds of Prey"
(Friday & Saturday only)

Anthony Cistaro
Kenneth Irons of "Witchblade"
(Saturday & Sunday only)



GUEST ARTISTS

Tony Bedard, J. Scott Campbell, Frank Cho, Scott Cieucin, Amanda Conner, Marie Croall, Chris Cross, Chuck Dixon, Scot Eaton, Larry Elmore, Butch Guice, Cully Hamner, Adam Hughes, Drew Johnson, Jeff Johnson, Dan Jolley, Barbara Kesel, Greg Land, Ron Marz, Scott McDaniel, JD Mettler, Jimmy Palmiotti, George Pérez, Brandon Peterson, Brian Pulido, Robert Rodi, R.A. Salvatore, Bart Sears, Kelsey Shannon, Jim Silke, Ray Snyder, Brian Stelfreeze, Karl Story, Roy Thomas, Ethan Van Sciver, Greg Land *plus many more...*

MEDIA GUESTS

Ted Raimi *"Xena" "Seaquest" & "Spider-Man"*
Kathy Garver *"Family Affair"*
Xenia Seeburg *"Lexx"*
Gil Gerard *"Buck Rogers"*
Erin Gray *"Buck Rogers"*
Robert Trebor *"Hercules"*
Lani Tupu *"Farscape"*
Virginia Hey *"Farscape"*
Jamie Farr *"M*A*S*H"*
Nichelle Nichols *"Star Trek"*
Walter Koenig *"Star Trek"*
David Prowse *"Star Wars"*
Peter Mayhew *"Star Wars"*
more to be announced...

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COOL COMICS-RELATED STUFF ON THE INTERNET

SITE OF THE MONTH

THE SUPERMAN HOMEPAGE

www.supermanhomepage.com

With issues of *Superman: The 10-Cent Adventure* selling faster than a speeding bullet, check out this site packed with more Supes stuff than the Fortress of Solitude. Buy loads of great Superman products, like T-shirts, action figures, games, comics, videos and DVDs, or browse through an exhaustive history that even covers the "Superman" radio show from the '40s! And don't skip the multimedia section, which features some of the sweetest screensavers and desktop themes we've ever seen!

JANUARY

1 Happy New Year! Check out this site to speed up your recovery from last night's partying. **www.hungover.net**

2 *Firebreather* #1 (Image). Don't miss the first book in Image's new superhero universe. Revamped official site: **www.imagecomics.com**

7 "Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Third Season" out on DVD today. Anya's debut, Faith turns bad and heartbreak with Angel. What a great season! Ultra-detailed episode guide: **www.buffyguide.com**

15 *Daredevil: The Movie* (Marvel). Read Bruce Jones' adaptation of the movie—a month before it hits the silver screen! Official movie site: **www.daredevilthemovie.com**

22 *Star Wars: Republic* #50 (Dark Horse). Snag this comic to discover what happens between "Episode II" and "Episode III." Funny animation: **www.ascimation.co.nz**

29 *The Crossovers* #1 (CrossGen). Robert Rodi's new series about an entire comic universe—contained inside a single house! CrossGen fan site: **www.cguniverse.com**

GUILTY PLEASURE OF THE MONTH

www.rathergood.com/vikings/

5 QUESTIONS WITH...

STEVE NILES

You might not know who Steve Niles is, but Hollywood certainly does.

The writer of 2002's hottest mini-series, IDW Publishing's *30 Days of Night*, has become the talk of the industry—almost overnight. Not only have issues of *30 Days* jumped off the shelves (good luck finding a copy of issue #1), but Niles recently became a millionaire when Senator International—"Spider-Man" director Sam Raimi's production company—recently bought the rights to the mini-series for a reported $1.2 million.

But just who is this up-and-comer, whose previous work includes Image titles *Fused* and *Hellspawn*? More importantly, what's it like to have a million bucks? *Wizard* got Niles to stop looking at his bankbook and giggling for five minutes to answer a few questions.

Almost overnight, you're one of comics' biggest names. Were you expecting this kind of reaction to *30 Days of Night*?

No, not at all. [*30 Days* artist] Ben [Templesmith] and I initially did *30 Days of Night* as a way to kill time until *Hellspawn* started up again. I had a list of pitches for IDW and [IDW President] Ted [Adams] handpicked this one and said, if anything, it would make for a good movie. It's really nice getting this kind of attention. The feedback has just been crazy.

Rumor has it you originally wrote *30 Days of Night* as a movie script. Is that true?

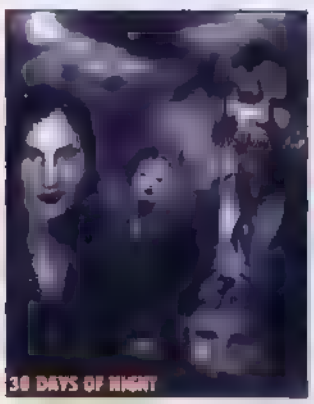
That was years ago when I was still living in Minnesota. I'd just got the idea from a newspaper article, talking about this little town in Alaska where alcohol was illegal because of the weeks of darkness and people were getting so depressed. So I immediately started jotting down a vampire story, then I shopped it around for about two years. All I got in return was a bunch of blank faces. No one got it.

What was your reaction when movie studios started calling?

Cautious excitement, simply because I've heard this before. Whenever there's interest in a project in L.A., you get so far then it hits a wall. With *30 Days*, all of a sudden we were at the next step after that wall. It went from, 'Yeah, people are interested,' to, 'Sam Raimi wants to make this film,' in the span of two weeks. I was in shock. My wife and I were just sitting by the phone, and every time it would ring, the news got more and more exciting. I don't think I slept for three days.

Now that you've established yourself, are there any characters you'd like to take a crack at?

Tons. I'm a lifelong comic reader, specifically Marvel. I'd love to write some of the Marvel Monsters—Morbius, Ghost Rider, Werewolf by Night, Tales of the Zombie, Man-Thing—there's tons of them. Also, Batman's been a character that I've loved for years that I'd like to write someday.



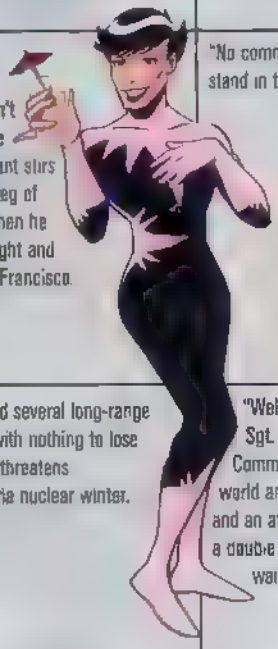
So what's the best thing about being a millionaire?

Well, I'm not there yet since I'm still waiting for some of the checks, but it's nice not having to worry about paying the rent for a couple of years at least! ■ CS

TO DYE FOR

With the success of *Daredevil: Yellow* and *Spider-Man: Blue*, writer Jeph Loeb and artist Tim Sale have fans eagerly anticipating their next colorful combination. With the pair hard at work on the upcoming *Hulk: Gray* as well as a possible Captain America project (Red, White and Blue?), we here at *Wizard* figured we'd help the boys out and pitch them on the next wave of color-themed projects we'd like to see. Here's what Loeb had to say about our ideas.

TITLE	OUR IDEA	LOEB'S TAKE
DR. DOOM: CHROME	Villain to some, savior to others, the Latverian dictator walks the fine line between protector of his people and cold-hearted killing machine.	"This one sounds great. We love Doom. But, Chrome? What, do you think this guy is, a rear bumper on an old Ford?"
THE THING: ORANGE	After a falling out with the other members of the Fantastic Four, the Thing packs his bags for sunny California, but is this gruff New Yorker ready for the West Coast's mood rings, plastic noses and the antics of Jack Black?	"Couldn't do it. Nothing rhymes with orange."
IRON MAN: GOLD	No amount of armor or new technology can aid Tony Stark when he takes on his greatest foe—a full bottle of Goldschlager!	"Ah, that would be telling. Nobody said we're done."
BEAST: BLUE	There's a little less bounce in the furry blue X-Man's tights thanks to a series of nookieless encounters with the opposite sex.	"We did blue with Spidey. Either pick a new color or a different character!"
NORTHSTAR: PINK	Tired of the military's "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, the Canadian mutant stirs up a powder keg of controversy when he quits Alpha Flight and moves to San Francisco.	"No comment. You all have to stand in the corner now."
CAPTAIN AMERICA: WHITE	Having secured several long-range missiles and with nothing to lose the Red Skull threatens Armageddon via nuclear winter.	"Well, if we had Bucky and Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos and the fate of the world and motorcycles and tanks and an atomic bomb at stake and a double meaning for 'white'—Hey wait a minute..."
VENOM: BLACK	A young psychologist recounts her first encounters with the dark and disturbing thoughts of Eddie Brock and his twisted obsession with Spider-Man.	"I've got a better one. How is Ultimate Venom different from regular Venom? Is that like Extra-Strength Tylenol vs. regular Tylenol? Is that because some people want their headaches to last longer? I'm sorry, what was the question?"



LOEB, SALE LINE UP [illegible] COORDINATED HOUNDS

ROSS GETS HARD CORE

New hardcover unleashes [illegible] for [illegible]

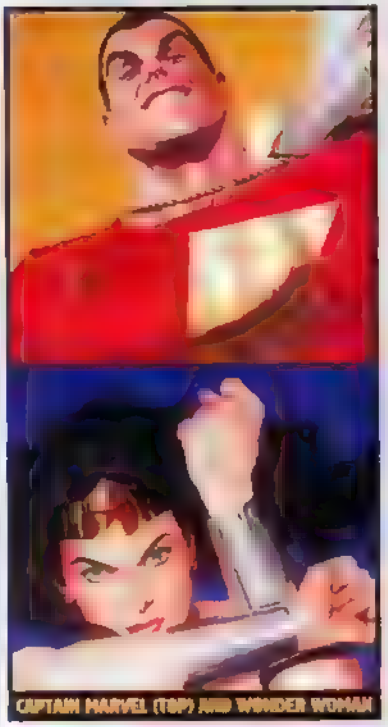
Ever wished you could own the most dynamic pieces of artwork that painter Alex Ross ever produced for DC Comics? Now you can.

A new 256-page hardcover titled *Mythology: The DC Comics Art of Alex Ross* will be available from Pantheon Books sometime in 2003 and showcase the painter's work on Superman, Wonder Woman, the Justice League and many other top DC Comics icons.

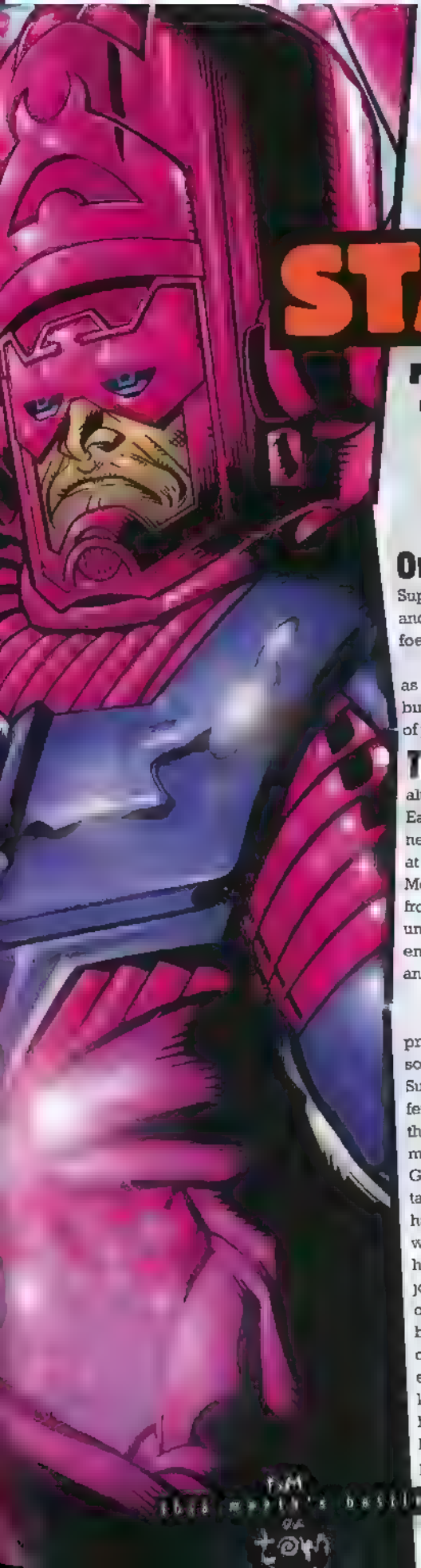
"It's a great honor to have something like this done for you," said Ross. "This book will really be my pride and joy."

The book will not only reprint Ross' previous work, though; it will also contain hundreds of never-before-seen sketches and new material including a re-telling of Robin's origin written by *Batman: War on Crime* writer Paul Dini and an original Superman and Batman story written by Chip Kidd (*The Cheese Monkeys*), who also designed and provided art direction for the project.

M. Night Shyamalan, the acclaimed director of "Signs" and "The Sixth Sense," who Ross collaborated with on "Unbreakable," also contributes an introduction to the new book. ■ MK



CAPTAIN MARVEL (TOP) AND WONDER WOMAN



LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

THE JLA VS. GALACTUS

Origins... Comprised of the greatest heroes of the DC Universe—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, The Flash, Plastic Man and Martian Manhunter—the Justice League of America stands defiant before foes no one hero may overcome!

Born on the utopian world of Taa in the Marvel Universe, the being known as Galan watched as the "Big Bang" destroyed his universe while it gave birth to ours. Reborn into this reality with an insatiable hunger for the life force of planets, he roams the galaxies as the world devourer known as Galactus!

The battle... Expanding his search of viable worlds to include alternate dimensions, Galactus locates one bristling with life energy: DC's Earth. Entering its atmosphere, Galactus begins constructing the machinery needed to consume the planet's life force. The Justice League—their attempts at communication ignored—surmise what he's planning and leap into action. Moving at superhuman speed, the Flash creates a vortex to suck the air away from the alien, only to be hammered by the giant's eye beams. Green Lantern unleashes a massive blast aimed at Galactus' machinery, only to have the emerald energy turned back upon the ring wielder. The League tastes defeat, and it all goes according to plan.

While the League distracts Galactus and forces him to use more of his precious energy, the Martian Manhunter gently probes his mind. Sending a soft telepathic message to his teammates, the League refocuses their attack. Superman, Wonder Woman and Plastic Man hammer the armor that keeps his ferocious life energies in check. The Flash, pushing himself to the limits of the Speed Force, engages in guerilla tactic hit and runs on Galactus' equipment, sabotaging it in hundreds of different locations. Reeling from the attack, Galactus abandons his machinery and begins to sink into the Earth, ready to take the planet's life energy directly. But that's when the past comes back to haunt him: hundreds of emerald faces—all those he knew and loved back when he was simply Galan of Taa—appear before him, and Galactus hesitates, his lips mouthing the names of those long gone. Green Lantern, his mind joined by that of the Martian Manhunter, shapes Galactus' long-dead memories to life while Superman and Wonder Woman deliver a devastating dual blow to Galactus' helmet. His armor compromised, the energies within Galactus consume him. "Now!" screams the telepathic cry of the Manhunter, and an emerald siphon channels what was once Galactus into space, where the raw life energy revitalizes all planetoids it touches. "We did it," says the Flash as he catches Green Lantern's unconscious body, "but at what cost? We had to kill him." "No..." replies the Manhunter, watching the last of the energy disperse, "...we freed him."

this month's battle drawn by [illegible]

RONIN WILD

BY JAMES McDONOUGH

The X-MEN kick it Japanese-style in this *exclusive* preview of the latest Mangaverse mini-series

If you think you've seen these mutants before, think again. After all, nothing is what it seems in *X-Men: Ronin*, Marvel's latest Mangaverse mini-series debuting in March.

Written by J. Torres (*X-Men Unlimited*) and penciled by Tokyo-based artist Makoto Nakatsuka (*Star Wars Tales*), the five-issue series picks up shortly after events in last January's *X-Men: Equinox* one-shot. But readers expecting a simple "mangatized" version of Marvel's merry mutants are wrong—dead wrong.

"*Ronin* may be a mutant book with a Japanese flavor," argues Torres, "but the big difference [from the regular Marvel U.] is we're free from continuity constraints and certain expectations. In the Mangaverse, we switch up roles and make heroes villains and vice versa. We even use fan-favorite characters even though they're dead in the Marvel Universe. By the same token, we can also kill pretty much anyone we want!"

Editor C.B. Cebulski, who wrote and co-created the characters in *Equinox*, notes that just as the *Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider-Clan* mini-series expanded on the web-slinger's place in the Marvel Mangaverse, *Ronin* will do the same for the X-Men. And newcomers need not fret—he assures the book will make perfect sense for new and old readers alike.

"*Ronin* starts at square one," he explains. "We introduce the characters in the first half of issue #1 as if you're reading them for the first time. But readers who are familiar with the X-Men will see characters and their powers in full effect."

Led by the samurai Wolverine, things get hairy for the team of mutants (which also includes Cyclops, Storm and Jean Grey) when they mix it up with the Hellfire Club, an international organization of not-so-nice mutants whose local chapter is run by the White Queen. When Jean Grey loses her memory and goes missing, Wolvie and the gang are quick to point the claw at Hellfire.

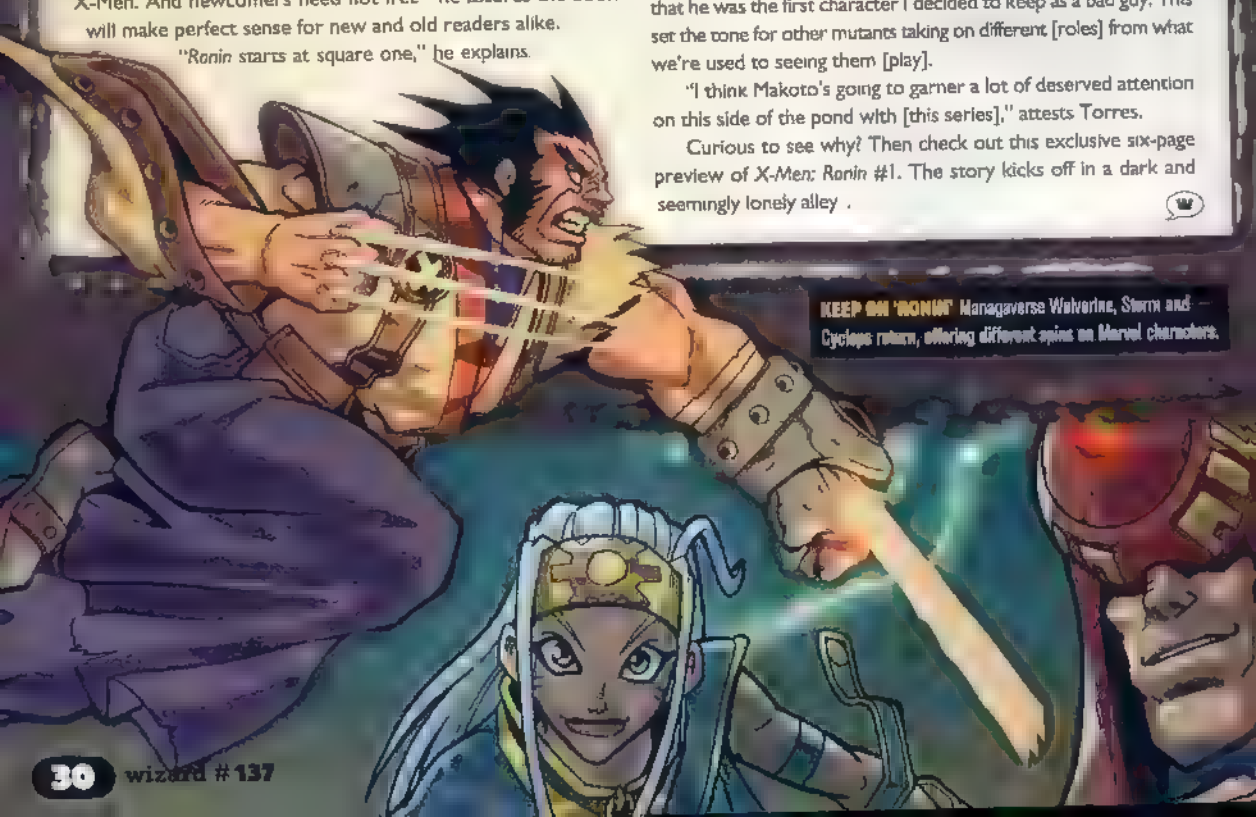
Adding even more authenticity to its "Mangaverse" billing, Marvel has called in a genuine manga artist to handle the pencils. Nakatsuka, a longtime X-Men fan, is only a little nervous about tackling the House's premiere superteam.

"I approach it as I would any job," he admits, "but I feel the heat when I mention it to friends. The 'X-Men' and 'Spider-Man' movies hit big here in Japan, so when I tell people I'm drawing the X-Men for the American market, they 'ooh' and 'aah' and that's when I get butterflies in my stomach."

Torres credits Nakatsuka for helping turn the Marvel U. on its ear for the Mangaverse. "Iceman started out as a water demon," he relates. "Makoto did such an awesome monster design for him that he was the first character I decided to keep as a bad guy. This set the tone for other mutants taking on different [roles] from what we're used to seeing them [play]."

"I think Makoto's going to garner a lot of deserved attention on this side of the pond with [this series]," attests Torres.

Curious to see why? Then check out this exclusive six-page preview of *X-Men: Ronin* #1. The story kicks off in a dark and seemingly lonely alley .



KEEP ON 'RONIN' Mangaverse Wolverine, Storm and Cyclops return, offering different spins on Marvel characters.

No!
NO!

Who are you? What do you want with me?
We represent the magnificent Shadowcat ninja clan--
--but tonight we are honored to recruit--
--for the new Hellfire Club, Jean Grey.
X-MEN
RONIN
HAJIME NO IPPO
(The First Step)
Story: J. Torres
Art: Makoto Nakatsuka
Colors: Guru eFX
Letters: Dave Sharpe
Editor: C.B. Cebulski
Editor in Chief: Joe Quesada
President: Bill Jemas
Special Thanks to Aki Yanagi

NO!
YAAAAH!!
Ungh!
Perhaps you don't
have enough juice--
-for all three
Don't worry.

We brought enough for everyone
We came--
prepared for
you, X Men!
Inadequately prepared if ya ask me.
SNIKT!

WANT MORE? PICK UP
X-MEN: RONIN #1
ON SALE MARCH 5!

THE RETURN OF THE (OTHER) MONSTER

BY JAMES McDONOUGH

Hulk's arch-nemesis, The Abomination, finally returns in this exclusive *WIZARD* preview of *Incredible Hulk* #50

He's mean, he's green and he's ready to trash everything on the scene. But we ain't talking about of Jade Jawed.

This February, one of the Hulk's most powerful villains returns to throw down with the Green Goliath as the Abomination resurfaces in *Incredible Hulk* #50. Written by fan-favorite Bruce Jones with art by Mike Deodato Jr., the gamma-irradiated monstrosity's arrival marks the first time that a supervillain has appeared in the pages of *Incredible Hulk* since the book changed direction over a year ago.

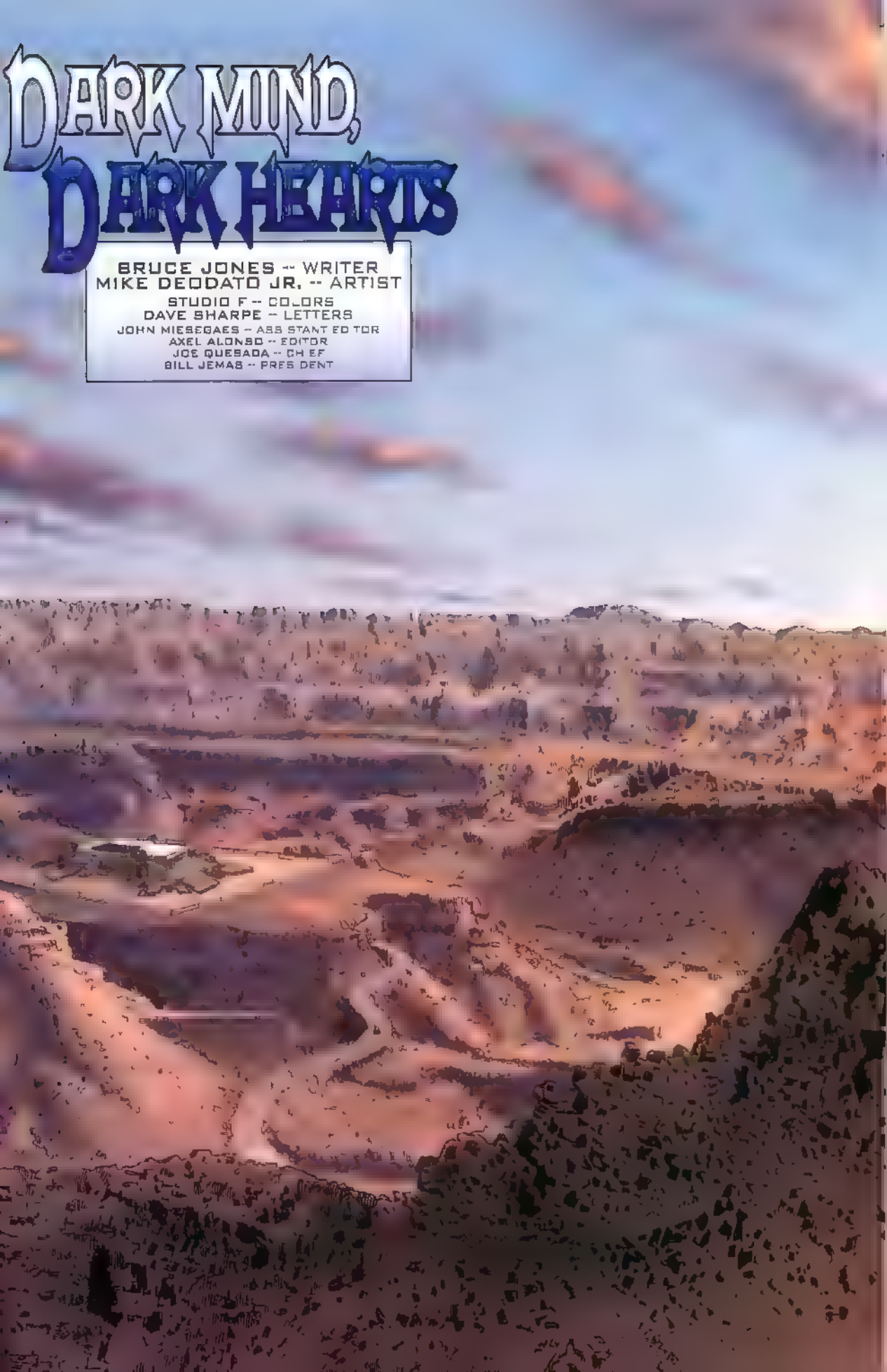
Though there has been a noticeable absence of the Hulk's rogues gallery since Jones took over with issue #34, the writer assures fans that he holds no disdain for supervillains and that it was really just a matter of timing.

"We simply weren't ready yet," explains Jones. "I'm one of those cock-eyed optimists who believe it's not so much what you're tackling but how you go about it. We haven't deliberately shied from traditional villains perhaps so much as the traditional use of them."

However, Jones believes the big news about *Incredible Hulk* #50 isn't the Abomination or the new storyarc (for details on the series, go to page 56), but rather Deodato Jr., who has many of Jones' peers green with envy. "Mike is a terrific technician and very astute storyteller," says Jones. "It isn't impossible to find one of those talents among artists out there, but it's rare to find both in one man."

Deodato also feels the love and attributes working with Jones as the perfect opportunity to showcase his newfound prowess in the medium. "I am a huge fan of Bruce Jones," gushes the Brazilian-based artist. "All I have to do is follow the script as it is, and the page turns out great. If I manage to bring out some emotional resonance in the reader, I've accomplished my objective."

Excited? Well, if you want to see the gamma-charged fruits of this duo's labor, then look to your right!


DARK MIND, DARK HEARTS
BRUCE JONES -- WRITER
MIKE DEODATO JR. -- ARTIST
STUDIO F -- COLORS
DAVE SHARPE -- LETTERS
JOHN MIESEGAES -- ASSISTANT EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO -- EDITOR
JOE QUESADA -- CHIEF
BILL JEMAS -- PRESIDENT

- what I'm sayin' is, if this here's a secret facility, then why we gotta wear these here badges?
So's they know we're authorized personnel
But if we's hidden, everybody here knows about us, right?
Yeah, so?
So, why we gotta wear these here badges?
...say...don't reco ect seein' that SUV before...

...t's asleep
How can you be *sure?*
--I mean, they *told* us it isn't human...

I said ,t e asleep
--and the chamber's c·ear of gas .get to work
Make t count!
What e the matter? Shoot!
. I . .I can t get a bead on the neck.
can't see n this damn dark!
Why didn't they give us infrareds?
Infrared doesn't work in here!
Give me that!

SNIK
VIP
Think you can manage to d sassemb.e t again?
Don't condeecend to me! You're just as scared as I am!
.. six.. five.. four.. three
He should be awake now..
Emil Blonsky... can you hear me ?
We've come to make you an offer.
ARE YOU READY FOR A KNOCK DOWN DRAG-OUT, EARTH-SHATTERING SLUGFEST? THEN PICK UP THIS FIVE-ISSUE ARC STARTING IN INCREDIBLE HULK #50 ON SALE FEBRUARY 12TH!

THE WIZARD Q&A

BRYAN singer

The 'X-Men 2' director dishes dirt on Wolverine's Weapon X roots, his new villain and a third X-flick

By Mike Cotton

BRYAN SINGER CAN'T CONTROL HIS LAUGHTER

sitting in his plush trailer outside Vancouver's

director finds himself surrounded by friends
executive Producer Tom DeSanto and Producer

s if trying to cover a wound from Wolverine's
claws, Singer and the group watch a DVD of
Spike & Mike's Twisted Animation." Singer's not
thinking about 20th Century Fox and Marvel
Studios' "X-Men 2" for the first time in days.

However, for most of the last year

such as an exact replica of the White House's

even better than the famed set of NBC's "The

Weapon X facility set with its off-white tile

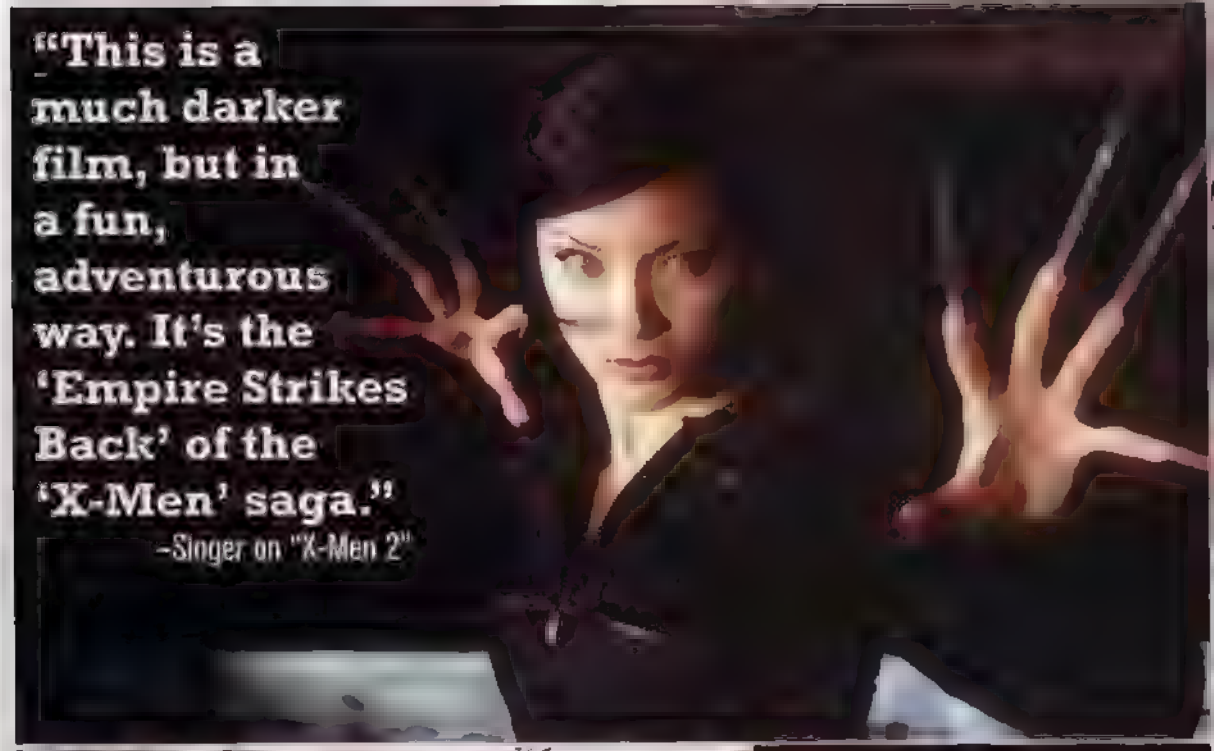
turing a variety of familiar mutations.

"Bryan's constantly going," says Shawn

"X-Men 2." "He's an amazing director and he
puts so much into the process. He never seems
to run out of energy. He's always ready to go."

But tonight, Singer doesn't want to go
anywhere—he just wants to laugh.

"Oh, this one's great," exclaims the 37-
year-old director of 2000's original "X-Men"
film and "The Usual Suspects," as he tries
unsuccessfully to work one of the four remotes
scattered about his living room. "Watch this



X-MEN TOO (clockwise from left) Stryker (Brian Cox) and Magneto (Ian McKellen); Lady Deathstrike (Kelly Hu) shows her claws; director Bryan Singer strikes down Magneto's holding cell; Storm (Halle Berry) takes off; Wolverine (Hugh Jackman) gets a security check.

one. Ah, I love this stuff."

The first "X-Men" film grossed over $150 million and single-handedly reinvigorated the comic book movie genre—not bad for a director known for smaller indy ensemble pieces. Tonight, Singer has some time to relax as the crew of May 2, 2003's "X-Men" sequel remove stunt equipment and prepare for another shot. It's almost 11 p.m. and Singer's day on set—which began at 6 p.m. for a night shoot with Alan Cumming (Nightcrawler), Famke Janssen (Jean Grey) and Halle Berry (Storm)—has barely begun.

WIZARD: The message of the first "X-Men" film was "tolerance." What message does "X-Men 2" have?

SINGER: This one's more about the characters and the evolution of the universe we're in. But it also still deals with tolerance and fear of the unknown. These are themes that are consistent, and have been for over 40 years in the X-Men universe. Obviously those things will be ever present in any X-Men story. A perfect example is Nightcrawler, who's a religious character, but also a mutant. No matter how tough times get, he still has belief. And he chooses faith instead of fear.

Is that aspect of Nightcrawler why you chose him as an addition to the cast?

Exactly. I like the duality of the character. That's the same reason I chose Rogue for the first film. I found the notion of a character that has immense power, but can never have human contact—that really interested me. That's a journey I'll explore more with the younger mutants [in this film].

What about the established cast?

We're further exploring the characters we've already introduced in the main X-Men universe. But there's also a pleasure in expanding on these characters that I hadn't had an opportunity to do in the first film. I also don't have to worry about long scenes in this one explaining, "Rogue is a conductor for human energy" or "This is Ororo Monroe, who's also called Storm." Or, "Here's Scott Summers, who's also Cyclops!" I don't have to shoot those scenes anymore. Those scenes aren't as fun to do.

TRUE or FALSE

The X-Men Cyclops is legally blind in one eye.

VITAL STATS

Bryan Singer

1966

"X-Men"

During the first film, you described Magneto and Charles Xavier's relationship like that of civil rights leaders Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King. Is their relationship the same in this film or has it evolved?

It's similar. It's just explored further. I can't say too much more about it without giving away plot points, but there is an extension of their relationship from the first film.

What can you say about your new villain—William Stryker?

He is something we didn't get to have in the last film; he's the human problem—the human villain. And his motivations are not only born of fear, but of a personal grudge, a personal anguish and anger. That adds an almost triangular relationship to where Xavier and Magneto were in the first film. Now these three points of view come into play.

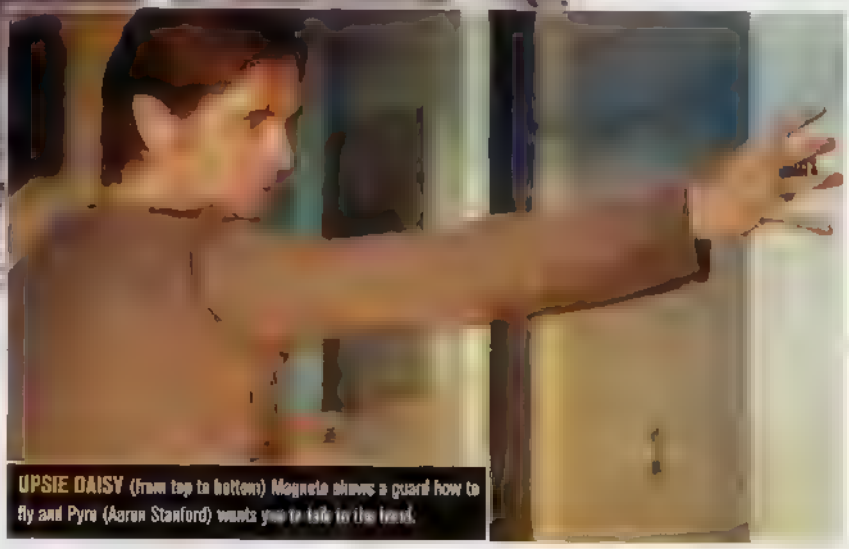
How big are the fight scenes in "X-Men 2" compared to the scenes in "X-Men"?

I'm of the belief that these "X-Men" movies aren't action movies, they're science fiction films with action in them. This isn't "Spider-Man." This isn't "The Matrix." You're not dealing with webs and

punching or guns, you know? There are these discernable kinds of fights and conflicts. Every kind of fight, every interaction involves such a diversity and such scope of visual affects. And they're so different that there will be some spectacular sequences. Everything's much grander than the first film

How's making this film compare to making the original?

The last one was a real pressure cooker. This one's a much more pleasant experience. There's more time, resources. And people's faith is with us now. This is a much darker film but in a good way—in a fun adventurous way, like "Empire Strikes Back." I hate to draw comparisons, but if I had to, this film is the "Empire Strikes Back" of the "X-Men" saga.



UPSIE DAISY (from top to bottom) Magneto shows a guard how to fly and Pyro (Aaron Stanford) wants you to talk to the hand.

What excites you the most about this film?

The story and the visual scope. We're doing so much more visually; we're being more visually aggressive. It's a little more edgy. With a first film, you worry a lot about comprehensibil ty. I think this film is quite clear but it's also...well, since it's establ shed I'm allowed a lot more freedom with my style.

This film is very effects-heavy. Is that tough for you since you're shooting things you won't have a chance to actually put together until after you wrap shooting?

Honestly? It is. There will probably be 800 effects before we're done. It's hard, but that's what you have an imagination for. And I've gotten used to it after the first film. It's easier now than trying to do it two years ago.

What's the story of "X-Men 2"? Can you boil it down?

It's the story of.. [*laughs*]...and I thought explaining "The Usual Suspects" was difficult. "Usual Suspects" was the story of five felons who meet in a lineup and go off on an odyssey of crime. It's the story of a U.S. customs agent searching for a missing criminal, who no one believes exists. [*Laughs*] Oh, it's so easy now to say that . "X-Men 2," though? It's the story of a progressive war against a new breed of humanity...a progressing war on a new breed of humanity. That would be it.

How much of Wolverine's past will fans see revealed in this film?

Quite a bit. There will be some cool sequences. I won't say any more than that. But you'll learn a lot.

What's Storm's role like in the film? Rumor has it she's more aggressive this time.

Uh-huh. [*Mouth full of cheese puffs.*] She's showing what she preaches. While she preaches and teaches that we should love one another, deep inside she's chosen a side, like she said in the first movie. And like she says in this movie, she's a little short on pity.

What did you think of the "Spider-Man" film?

Oh, it was great. I liked it.

Will "X-Men 2" be bigger?

[*Pauses*] That's difficult to say. You say "Spider-Man," and everybody in the world knows what that means. My parents know who Spider-Man is. They don't know the story of Spider-Man, but they know he's a guy with a red suit that makes webs. You say "X-Men," and there's a portion of culture that knows it deeply, then there's another portion that now knows it from the movie and then there's a portion that doesn't know it at all. So it's a tough comparison to figure. In terms of bigger, it would be difficult to beat "Spider-Man." But we're definitely going to be a big movie.

If mutants really existed, would they be feared

TRUE or FALSE

or huge celebrities?

That's a good question. I don't know. It would depend on how they conducted themselves, but if their mutation was particularly attractive then they would be huge stars. If it was freaky and hard to understand, then they might be ostracized as goes it with people.

If you were a mutant, would you side with Professor Xavier or Magneto?

Professor X always. Always love and coexist.

Now that you've gotten Nightcrawler in the film, whom would you like to add in a third film?

Beast; and I have a personal [favorite], but I have to keep that one to myself. It's a secret.

Have you thought about "X-Men 3" at all?

Yeah, I have. I'd like to do another one, if things work out this time. I have some ideas, and there's still a story to tell.

Staff Writer Mike Cotton has a personal favorite mutant he'd like to see in an X-Men film, but Strong Guy won't be making an appearance.

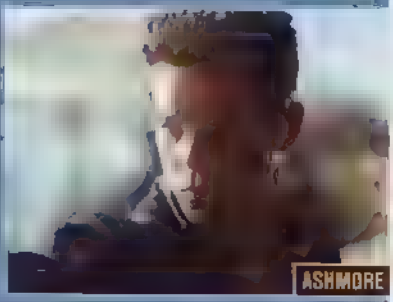
ICE COLD

Shawn Ashmore talks about Iceman and "X-Men 2"

A year ago, Shawn Ashmore wasn't even sure he'd be invited back for the second installment of the "X-Men" film franchise.

According to the 24-year-old actor, who plays Bobby Drake/Iceman in "X-Men 2," he thought he might be seeing the film in theaters rather than being on set with his cast mates.

"Bobby actually got an extended role in this one, which is really cool," says Ashmore ("Cadet Kelly"). After the first one, it was kind of touch-and-go. The relationships were established but there was no evidence that Bobby would be back. But they like the character, and it turned out that they actually decided to up his part."


ASHMORE

As fans of the first "X-Men" film will remember, Rogue, played by Anna Paquin ("The Piano"), and Ashmore's Iceman developed an on-screen romance. The actor says fans can expect more of that, as well as more of Iceman's powers, in "X-Men 2."

"I don't want to give away too much but Bobby's kind of Rogue's protector in this movie and he's also closer with Wolverine because of that," says Ashmore. "I want people to see it on the big screen and I don't want to ruin it but there's definitely more of a display of what Bobby can do in terms of his powers than the first film."

There's also a new love triangle in "X-Men 2" with the addition of Aaron Stanford ("Tadpole") as Pyro, a pyrokinetic mutant also enrolled at Xavier's School.

"It's an interesting relationship," explains Ashmore. "There's this whole fire and ice thing with a girl in the middle, so it's that kind of triangle. I think Pyro and Bobby are so different and as you can imagine, boys will be boys." **MC**

1-2-3 DRAW! (from top to bottom) Nightcrawler (Alan Cumming) smiles for his audience; Cyclops and Jean Grey (Famke Janssen) face off.

200 PREVIE

By the WIZARD Staff

WIZARD highlights the 10 events set to rock the new year and runs down what's in store for over 100 of your favorite titles

GET READY TO BE BLOWN AWAY.

In a year that will see the JLA and Avengers finally clash, J. Michael Straczynski launch his adults-only spin on the JLA and Michael Turner introduce two new creator-owned mini-series, fans can't ask for much more in 2003–but they're going to get it anyway.

If you thought 2002 was huge–from Jeph Loeb and Jim Lee's *Batman* to the '80s explosion with Transformers–it can't hope to compare to just how astounding and exciting the plans for 2003 are.

"There's no question 2003 will be bigger than 2002," enthuses Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada. "The one thing I've been very lucky to experience since being in the E-I-C's chair at Marvel is that every year has been an up year since the previous one. I think there are more and more people going through the doors of retailers. I don't see this new trend stopping anytime soon."

The projects planned for next year are so big that *Wizard* runs down the top 10 events on every fans' must-read list, giving you the lowdown on each project's story, creative team, release date and even the projected sales figures.

We also pour through over 100 of your favorite series from *Ultimate X-Men* to *100 Bullets* to *Sojourn*, profile the rookie creators to keep your eye on and predict what the creators *aren't* telling you.

From top to bottom, this 2003 Preview gives you everything you need to know about the hottest comic book plans for the new year. So read on, and find out why you may very well have to jack up your comic spending limit.

10 BATMAN VS. JOKER: THE FINAL BATTLE?

WHEN: *Batman* #613-#614 (March-April 2003)
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Jeph Loeb (*Spider-Man: Blue*) and artist Jim Lee (*X-Men*)
THE LOWDOWN: For more than half a century, Batman has witnessed his arch-nemesis commit atrocities from crippling Oracle to killing Robin. But come March, the Dark Knight will finally reach his limit.

"In *Batman* #613, Jim [Lee] and I hope to answer once and for all the age-old fanboy question, 'Why doesn't Batman just kill the Joker?'" says Loeb. "And maybe in this issue, he finally does."

While the 12-issue "Hush" storyarc will only be at its halfway point when #613 hits 'stands, the highly anticipated, no-holds-barred slugfest between the two mortal enemies is *the* event that has Bat-fans in a tizzy.

"The best way I can describe it without giving too much away is, it's the last straw," hints Loeb. "Batman remembers all of the destruction the Joker has caused throughout the years and it just builds up inside of him until he just can't take it anymore. It'll be very violent and disturbing, which for a Batman story is really saying something."

Yet the throw-down with the Clown Prince of Crime won't be the end of Batman's troubles, as Loeb points out that consequences of the outcome will follow Batman into his relationships with both Robin and Nightwing.

So who will get the last laugh? Our bet's on Loeb, Lee and the bean counters.

PROJECTED SALES: Because DC allows reorders, each ish will fall in the Top 5 on Diamond's Top 300 list, moving about 100,000 copies apiece in initial retailer orders. When all is said and done, reorders will jack up numbers even higher. ■ **Casey Seijas**

BANG, WHO'S DEAD? Loeb and Lee finally answer why Batman doesn't just kill the Joker already.

9 JLA: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE

WHEN: November 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Paul Dini ("Batman: The Animated Series") and artist Alex Ross (*Kingdom Come*)
THE LOWDOWN: The dynamic duo of Dini and Ross join forces once again, and this time it's to take on DC's most powerful superteam with November's graphic novel, *JLA: Liberty and Justice*. Unlike previous Dini/Ross collaborations, this is an actual comic with word balloons—Ross' first since *Kingdom Come*. And while details are a closely guarded secret, Ross does let on that the featured team of Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, Barry Allen/Flash, Hal Jordan/Green Lantern, Martian Manhunter and Aquaman will face off against a biological threat that turns into something much bigger than originally anticipated.

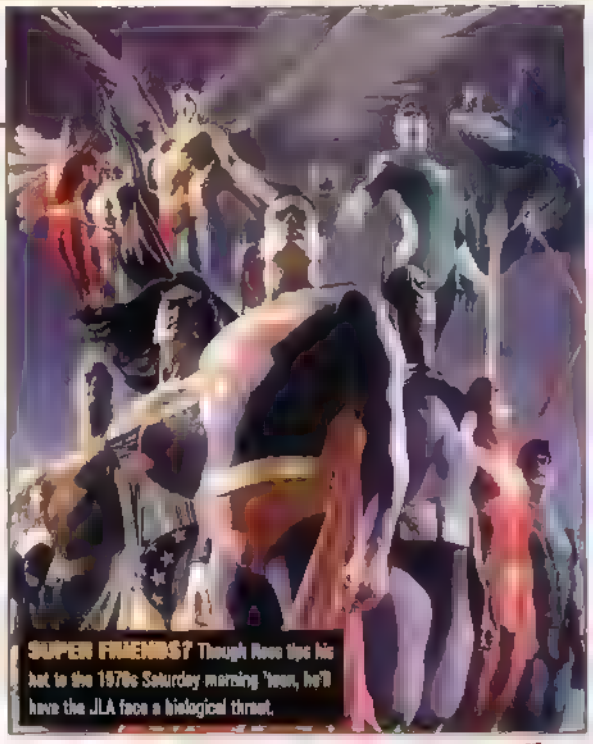
Ross sees the project as the perfect opportunity to do "justice" to some of his favorite characters, fulfilling one of his dream projects.

"I always wanted to provide that perfect 'Super Friends' episode of the Justice League, and this is kind of that attempt," he explains.

One character Ross wants to do right is Aquaman, whom he feels doesn't get the respect an Atlantean King deserves.

"He's a man full of responsibility," he attests. "Making the look seem good, making the character seem tough, making his actions seem strong—that's a challenge with this book. I've come up with a number of things that will make that effective here. We'll see if anybody agrees."

PROJECTED SALES: Top 15 at 70,000 copies. If anyone's got the magic touch—make that the magic brush—it's Ross. Even at a high-end cover price, moving this many copies would be HUGE. ■ **James McDonough**



SUPER FRIENDS? Though Ross tips his hat to the 1970s Saturday morning 'toon, he'll have the JLA face a biological threat.

TRUE or FALSE

8 TEEN TITANS

WHEN: July 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writers Geoff Johns (*Flash*) and Judd Winick (*Green Lantern*) and pencilers Mike McKone (*Exiles*) and Alé Garza (*Ninja Boy*)
THE LOWDOWN: As if Johns didn't already have enough to deal with on a monthly basis (he also writes *Hawkman*, *JSA*, *Flash* and *Avengers*), now he's got a whole new headache—teenagers!

After the phasing out of *Titans* (February's #50 is the series finale) and *Young Justice* (March's #53), followed by the three-issue *Titans/Young Justice: Graduation Day* crossover by Winick and Garza, Johns and McKone will pick up the reins for a new *Teen Titans* ongoing.

The first thing Johns plans to do with the team is replace them with another DC super-squad, namely Young Justice.

"The only Titans who will stay on are Cyborg, Starfire and Raven, but it will be very focused on the kids in Young Justice [Robin, Kid Flash, Superboy and Wonder Girl] and what it's like to be a kid superhero or a sidekick who's always in the shadows," explains Johns.

The busy writer is still in the early stages of plotting the book's first few issues, but he's quick to drop some hints.

"There will be an all-new Kid Flash," relates Johns. "Wonder Girl will face some problems with school and there's a big twist between Superboy and Kid Flash that'll change both characters pretty dramatically."
PROJECTED SALES: Top 20 at 65,000 copies. If not for DC's reorder policy, it would be higher (and eventually will be). The red-hot Johns appears to be following what made the Pérez/Wolfman Titans a success in the '80s, and veteran artist McKone stands primed to break out. Trust us, this Titans series will be the real deal. ■ *CS*

NEW TITANS Finally, Young Justice dons the Teen Titan tag, with all-star writer Geoff Johns, and Mike McKone to give 'em trouble.

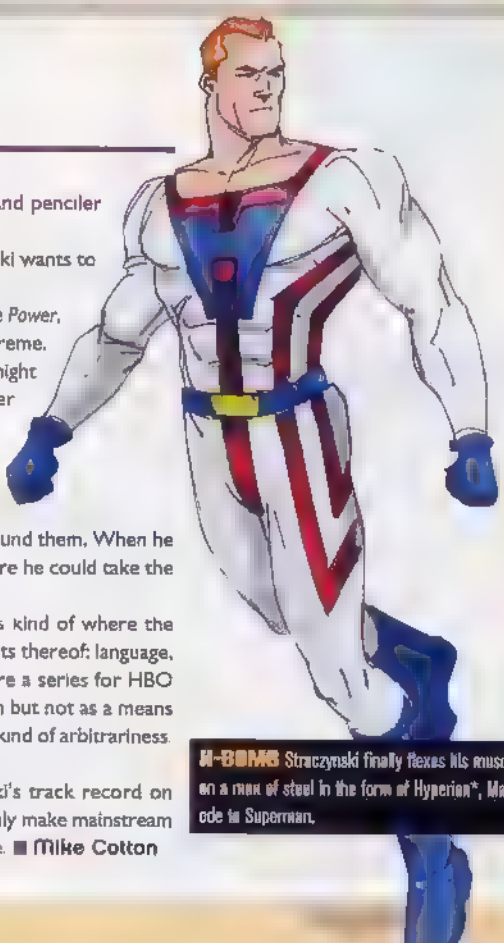
7 SUPREME POWER

WHEN: Summer 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer J. Michael Straczynski (*Rising Stars*) and penciler Gary Frank (*Midnight Nation*)
THE LOWDOWN: Just like Christina Aguilera, J. Michael Straczynski wants to get dirty.

Beginning this summer, Straczynski and Gary Frank launch *Supreme Power*, an adults-only version of Marvel's take on the JLA, the Squadron Supreme. With these two on board and a big push by Marvel, this series just might edge out Vertigo/DC's *Preacher* as the highest-selling mature reader book in a decade.

Straczynski says the story of *Supreme Power* will begin with team leader Hyperion being rocketed to Earth during infancy. Then he'll explain just how each of the team's other characters came to be and how they came to use their powers to improve the crappy world around them. When he pitched the series, the *Rising Stars* creator says he wanted to make sure he could take the book into adult territory.

"That meant putting it under the MAX line because, well, that's kind of where the wall is," says Straczynski. "If this is the real world, it has all the elements thereof: language, sensuality, content, violence, you name it. I'm writing this as if it were a series for HBO or Showtime, using that kind of freedom as a point of story liberation but not as a means for gratuitous... well, gratuitous *anything*, really. I don't believe in that kind of arbitrariness. I just wanted to be able to take the kid gloves off and go for it."
PROJECTED SALES: Top 5 at 100,000 copies. With Straczynski's track record on *Amazing Spider-Man*, an adult-oriented take on superheroes will not only make mainstream headlines, it could become the hottest mature-reader title of all time. ■ **Mike Cotton**



H-BOMB Straczynski finally flexes his muscles on a man of steel in the form of Hyperion*, Marvel's ode to Superman.

*Not final art

6 1602

WHEN: Summer 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*), penciler Andy Kubert (*Origin*) and colorist Richard Isanove (*Ultimate X-Men*)
THE LOWDOWN: All that's known about Neil Gaiman's first Marvel work in almost 20 years can be summed up with one word—zilch.

In fact, the title *1602* isn't even a sure deal according to insiders at Marvel. The project, which has surfaced as one of the biggest closely guarded secrets in comics over the last year, will reportedly involve almost every character in the Marvel Universe.

"It's going to be a superhero comic...kind of," teases Gaiman. "At first glance, it might look like an 'Elseworlds' or a *What If...*, but it's not going to be one. It's actually going to be a real story with real important consequences. But it will also be self-contained."

Gaiman says the story will be a secret until it's ready for publication. He did mention, however, that he's having a blast picking from Marvel's rich library of characters.

"There's a wild lunacy to this project, which I'm really looking forward to," beams Gaiman. "And these are all characters I've never done anything with, and there's a certain joy to going, 'Oh, how about Nick Fury? Yes, okay, he works and oh, Doctor Strange and the X-Men. and the Avengers!' It's fun to reinvent the Marvel Universe."

PROJECTED SALES: Top 5 at 90,000 copies. Gaiman's triumphant return to comics—along with the mega-popularity of the *Origin* art team of Kubert and Isanove—will have fans place the eventual *1602* collection next to other big cast opuses like *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come* ■ MC

DINOSAUR NEIL With the entire Marvel Universe at his disposal, Gaiman returns to comics in a huge way.

5 HULK: GRAY

WHEN: June 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Jeph Loeb (*Batman*) and Tim Sale (*Spider-Man: Blue*)
THE LOWDOWN: From the Abomination to Wolverine, the Hulk has traded blows with some of the toughest characters in the Marvel U. However, in June, he'll face his toughest opponent yet—himself.

In the third installment of their series of "color books," Loeb and Sale reunite for *Hulk: Gray*, a six-issue mini-series that retells the origin of Marvel's Green Goliath, who was originally (and briefly) colored gray. While Loeb assures fans there will be plenty of mass destruction, at the heart of *Gray* lies a story of love and eventual loss, much like the *Daredevil: Yellow* and *Spider-Man: Blue* mini-series.

"As with the other 'color books,' this will center on a love story between Betty Ross and Bruce Banner," describes Loeb. "To a certain extent, this will also be a love story about Betty and the Hulk, since she seemed to be the only character who really understood who the Hulk was. Yet she also knew she was getting involved in a very dangerous situation as well."

Most importantly, Loeb and Sale intend to show what Stan Lee and Jack Kirby had in mind when they originally created the Hulk.

"Really, what Stan and Jack had created was somebody who was far more complex than just a monster who was let out—this is not just a werewolf by any means," explains Loeb. "These are two very distinct individuals, and they'll eventually destroy each other as well."

PROJECTED SALES: Top 15 at 80,000 copies. A Loeb and Sale project constitutes one of the surest bets in comics. ■ CS

GRAY MATTER Sale may have illustrated the gray goliath exclusively for *Wizard*, but we have to wonder if he'll be giving Hulk some much-needed dental work.

TRUE or FALSE

This Fantastic Four and The Challengers of the Unknown were [illegible] be more successful.

ANSWER: FALSE

4 WOLVERINE

RAZOR SHARP With Rucka and Robertson on board, this could be the best Logan run in 20 years.

WHEN: May 2003

MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Greg Rucka (*Elektra*) and penciler Darick Robertson (*Fury*)

THE LOWDOWN: He's the best there is at what he does—lucky for fans, Greg Rucka writes comics.

Beginning with May's issue #189, Rucka and artist Robertson take a shot at Marvel's top mutant, Wolverine, and according to the writer, fans can look forward to a classic take on the former Weapon X.

"He's the original Marvel badass," he raves. "He makes everyone else in the Marvel Universe look candy ass. He is the hardest of the hard, and it's not because of his abilities or his talent—it's all his head and his heart. He is the wolf in the urban jungle. He is the guy who can cut the weak and the ill and the sickness from the pack. And he does it emotionlessly. He does it dispassionately. He does it precisely."

Rucka was originally apprehensive to take on Wolverine, since so many high-profile creators have already done so much with the mutant. But after Robertson and editor Axel Alonso signed on, he couldn't take a chance on not being a part of the new Wolverine team.

And once he sat down to write it (the first issue is already done), the Portland-based scribe said the first story came quite easily to him.

"My first arc will be about five issues," explains Rucka. "What happens in the first issue is that he becomes a witness unwittingly to a great injustice. It's a girl who's been wronged and Logan's going to try to put it right, or at least get some payback for her."

PROJECTED SALES: Top 5 at 125,000. A steady top 10 seller, with the addition of Rucka and Robertson, expect *Wolverine* to consistently spar with *Batman* and *Ultimates* for the No. 1 slot ■ MC

3 MICHAEL TURNER'S NEW PROJECTS

WHEN: Summer 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writers Geoff Johns (*JSA*) and Jeph Loeb (*Spider-Man: Blue*), artist Michael Turner (*Fathom*)
THE LOWDOWN: It's double your pleasure, double your fun when Turner debuts two new projects in 2003. It promises to be a benchmark year for the Top Cow superstar, whose primary goal is not to keep fans waiting.

"I'm in my old work ethic frame of mind," insists Turner. "I want to be so far ahead on this thing that the issues will be coming out monthly. It's going to be a crazy year."

Dragonfly: Soulfire centers around a young telepath who must master his mystical powers to save the futuristic world in which he lives. "Basically, the concept focuses on people whose subconscious takes on a life of its own, granting them telepathic abilities," explains Turner. "The [female star of *Dragonfly*] is basically in charge of training a boy named Grell in how to use the powers of his subconscious. Unfortunately, they're complete opposites—he's at an age where he's very optimistic about life, while she's somewhat jaded about the world." In order to thwart the giant dragons wreaking havoc throughout the planet, the two would-be-saviors go on a quest to find the mysterious Five Masters who can teach Grell how to control his fantastic abilities.

Ekos, a cross between "Independence Day" and "The Lord of the Rings" according to Turner, takes place on an alien world based in natural mysticism. Here, several elemental races peacefully coexist in their own separate microcosms until one day alien invaders intent on colonizing the planet begin to set up shop. The various races are soon forced to band together to thwart this otherworldly threat.

The concept was a great opportunity for Turner to make a statement without standing on a soapbox. "When human beings tear up a whole mountainside to build a condominium, they don't think about the squirrels they put out of house and home," explains the artist. "This story sort of takes that perspective. These alien invaders aren't evil. But what they're doing when seen from a certain perspective is."

Both concepts will actually make their debut in the pages of *Wizard* #138 with two separate six-page previews. Fans will get to vote which book Turner does next, with the first issue debuting at this year's Wizard World Convention in Chicago. Turner finds this battle of the books a great chance to reward loyal fans.

TURNER 'ROUND Top Cow's top star takes the plunge on two new series in '03 (*Dragonfly: Soulfire* sketches shown here)—and fans will choose which comes first.

"I wanted to do both concepts so bad," laughs Turner. "I like involving the fans and hearing what they have to say. I've been drawing the same kind of stuff for the past few years and would love to see which direction they'd like to see me go in. I'm not just out here drawing for myself."

PROJECTED SALES: Top 10 at 100,000 copies each. Turner alone would attract the numbers, but with Loeb and Johns aboard, sales will skyrocket. If Top Cow does cool variants and/or alternate interiors like in the past, these could even be No. 1 sellers at 125,000 copies. ■ JMcD

TRUE or FALSE

Before going with Michael Clarke Duncan, the studio tried testing Danny DeVito in a "giant suit" which gave the actor an additional three feet of height and almost 300 pounds.

ANSWER: FALSE

2 SUPERMAN/ BATMAN

WHEN: Late 2003

MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Jeph Loeb (*Batman*) and artist Ed McGuinness (*Superman*)

THE LOWDOWN: Now that he's had successful runs writing *Superman* and *Batman*, what does Jeph Loeb have planned for an encore? Why, taking on both characters at the same time, of course!

Never one for backing down from a challenge, Loeb teams up with his former *Superman* penciler Ed McGuinness for an all-new ongoing series titled *Superman/Batman*, which will revisit the two characters he recently reinvigorated for DC.

"What we wanted was a big action book that shows what these two guys do best," describes Loeb. "At the same time, I want to try and help redefine their relationship. I just don't buy the whole begrudgingly-put-up-with-each-other relationship. They're both pretty amazing heroes and I think they both understand that, so we're going to try and bring that to the book."

Kicking off in late 2003 *Superman/Batman* kicks off with a six-issue storyarc in which the two DC icons attempt to bring down a shared thorn in their side.

"This is not going to be a book about Clark's or Bruce's personal life," explains Loeb. "This is about these two heroes and their most immediate problem—President Lex Luthor. We're going to deal with that once and for all. He's messed with these two for too long, and now it's time for some payback."

Yet even though DC's big guns might be leading the charge against the corrupt president, according to Loeb, not everyone shares their views. In fact, Loeb hints that during the first storyarc, heroes will take arms against heroes in an event that will be reminiscent of 1996's *Kingdom Come*.

"It's going to force the heroes to choose between their friendship and loyalties to Batman and Superman, and what the president of the United States wants done," says Loeb. "Without giving too much away, we're going to give fans some of the big throw-downs they've been asking to see in continuity, like Superman vs. Captain Marvel and Batman vs. Hawkman."

PROJECTED SALES: No. 1 for the month at 110,000. Loeb has the Midas Touch when it comes to Batman and Superman, and now that he's teaming up with fan-favorite *Supes* artist McGuinness, expect this book to find a permanent residence amongst the top 25 sellers. ■ CS

TAG TEAM Loeb and McGuinness reunite for another ultimate mismatch. Bats and Supes may be on the same side, but they never see eye-to-eye.

1 JLA/AVENGERS

WHEN: Summer 2003
MAJOR PLAYERS: Writer Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*) and artist George Pérez (*The Avengers*)
THE LOWDOWN: After 20 long years, it's finally going to happen. The biggest guns in the Marvel and DC Universes will collide when the Justice League of America and the Avengers go toe to toe in the most anticipated comic book crossover of all time.

"It's the JLA. It's the Avengers," barks Busiek. "The premier superteams of two worlds, together at long last. A threat big enough to menace two realities. Cosmic action. Marvel heroes versus DC villains and vice versa."

Featuring an amazing set of wraparound covers, the four-issue crossover series can only be described by Busiek as "a full, 200 pages of cross-universe, superteam Pérez-y goodness."

As for plot details, both Busiek and Pérez remain hush-hush in the hopes the excitement and suspense will snowball even more than their high expectations. However, they insist that one thing fans can bank on is that the story will not focus solely on a handful of stars.

"Two teams, two groups, two pantheons of heroes," recites Busiek. "More Avengers than you can count. More JLAers than the Avengers can count. There's a reason we needed 200 pages."

While a project of this magnitude—not to mention the high expectations—is daunting enough, it's the two superteams' distinct philosophies on taking on baddies that provided Busiek with one of his toughest challenges.

"I expect we'll see ways in which the teams are different, as well as some of the similarities they share," explains the writer. "The first thing we did is pitch a DC villain [Starro] at the Avengers that the JLA usually have to puzzle out a solution to and a Marvel villain [Terminus] at the JLA that the Avengers usually have to smack down big time, and see how each team handles it. But that's just the start. After that, things get stranger and far more dangerous."

And that stranger danger may result in the icons from both squads pitted against one another. But which encounter has fanboys salivating the most?

"Going into it, the one conflict I was asked about the most was Batman and Captain America," relates Busiek. "I think it's a perfect clash and not what people will expect. But Cap's got more to deal with than the Caped Crusader."

Legions of fanboys worldwide aren't the only ones pinching themselves over this dream event.

"I never dreamed of tackling a project like this—not for real," laughs Busiek, who heard about the original crossover while working for a fan magazine that initially announced the event nearly 20 years ago.

"I hadn't broken in as a writer yet, so I figured the crossover would be long-finished and published before I wrote comics professionally," Busiek recalls. "Even when it fell through, I never expected to actually get the assignment to write either book regularly, much less both of them in the same project." Many years and several false starts later, Busiek's career is coming full circle now that his wildest fantasy is coming true as he finds himself in the driver's seat of this massive project.

And speaking of anticipation, not even the most hardcore fanboy seems as excited about the project as veteran artist George Pérez.

"I'm so jazzed at some of the stuff that Kurt has come up with," giggles the Florida-based artist. "Believe me, I'm glad this project is causing such a stir. I know realistically that *JLA/Avengers* has had 20 years of anticipation which I hope I live up to."

Busiek has no doubts the modern-day master of the superteam was the only choice to take on a project of this visual size and scope.

"He was born to do the ultimate superteam crossover. He's one of the best artists ever on both series," gushes Busiek. "Plus, he's been champing at the bit to do this book—and do it right—for 20 years. It's hard to compete with that kind of energy. George was there first, and when he's going pedal-to-the-metal nobody else could keep up."

Pérez sees the project as a labor of love long in the making. "For a man who's been working in this business now [for 29 years], to be able to work on stuff I really really want to do, to do the ultimate superhero book—I've been very lucky," marvels Pérez, who's quick to admit he's even found a way to work in his beloved Teen Titans, which he co-plotted and illustrated during the early '80s. "Hey, I have certain things I must do."

PROJECTED SALES: No. 1 at 150,000 copies for each issue. There's no better marketing tool than 20 years of fanboy anticipation. Plus, with Busiek and Pérez taking their time to ensure this book stands out as one of the greatest crossovers of all time, it's an event that will appeal to readers across the board. ■ JMcD

COMICS' SUPER BOWL Fans have waited 20 years to see this official, "yes-it's-really-happening" wraparound cover to *JLA/Avengers* #1 by Pérez.

ones to watch

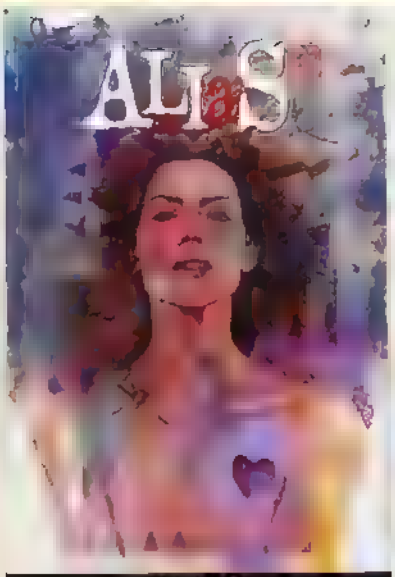
Kaare Andrews

CLAIM TO FAME: While Andrews has garnered acclaim from critics and praise from both mainstream and niche fans for his writing on Marvel Mangaverse's *Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider Clan*, it's his cover work for *Incredible Hulk* that makes this 27-year-old Canadian currently the hottest painter in the industry.

2003 BUZZ: In the past year, Andrews upped the ante on his incomparable cover art, finding inspiration in everything from cereal boxes to Francis Ford Coppola films to even Maurice Sendak's classic children's book, *Where the Wild Things Are*. While it may be hard to top that, Andrews plans to put his best foot forward in 2003 as he continues to supply covers for what's sure to be a big year for Marvel's Green Goliath. In addition, Andrews, a full-service artist who likes to pencil, ink, color, letter, paint and design his own work, will write and supply the art for the upcoming *Thundercats/Battle of the Planets* crossover, and he's set to work on several top-secret projects at Marvel. "There are no limits," he announces.

DREAM PROJECT: According to Andrews, between the *Hulk* covers, Marvel Mangaverse work and the highly anticipated *Thundercats/Battle of the Planets* crossover, he's achieved practically everything he's ever wanted from comics. Only one dream remains: "Naked mud wrestling with Milla Jovovich."

2003 FORECAST: You'd think that after a year's worth of work doing *Hulk* covers, Andrews would be showing signs by now that he's growing tired of the big green lug, but that's not the case. There's only one thing Andrews is antic pating in 2003. "Two words: 'Hulk' movie," says Andrews without stuttering. ■ *CS*



ALIAS

BATGIRL

ACTION COMICS
(DC)

January's #799 (by Joe Casey and Tom Raney) serves up a prologue to "The Harvest" storyline, featuring the return of General Zod. Then in issue #800, it's a big anniversary issue that looks back on Superman's life and his effect on the world. In #801, "The Harvest" swings into full throttle as a bomb goes off that grants normal people metahuman powers. And in April's issue #802, the origin of Zod is revealed once and for all!

ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN
(DC)

Issue #612 from Joe Casey and Derec Aucoin sees an imposter Superman dishing out his own harsh brand of justice. Then in February's #613, Funky Flashman starts making a buck off Superman merchandise without the Man of Steel's knowledge. Issue #614 sees Superman visiting the town of Heroville, a secret government installation where everyone is a superhero. Beyond that, *Adventures* focuses on the mysterious Hollow Men and their effect on Heroville.

ALIAS
(MAX/Marvel)

A four-issue arc, titled "Underneath," begins in January (#18-#21) by writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Michael Gaydos. A new drug gives users a taste of what it's like to have superpowers, and detective Jessica Jones must find one of its latest addicts Spider-Woman. April's #22 begins a three-issue story, in which readers will "finally find out what happened to Jessica the last time she put on her costume and why she's so mad at Carol Danvers," hints Bendis.

AVENGERS
(Marvel)

Writer Geoff Johns and penciler Alan Davis' *Avengers* #63 (January) wraps up the "Standoff" crossover with *Iron Man* and *Thor*, in which the team clashes over Thor's decision to move Asgard over Manhattan. Next comes the six-part "Red Zone" by Johns and new penciler Olivier Coipel (*Legion*), about the Falcon and a bio-terrorism plot at Mt. Rushmore. Expect to see up to 18 issues of *Avengers* in 2003, especially during summer's "The Search for She-Hulk" storyline. There'll also be a crossover with *Uncanny X-Men* and of course, DC's *JLA* (see related story on page 64)!

BATGIRL
(DC)

Writer Kelly Puckett and penciler Damion Scott kick things off in January with a new villain named Alpha, but Batman appears in February's #38, forbidding Batgirl from hitting the rooftops. Good luck. Next is a fill-in storyline by Dylan Horrocks (*Hunter The Age of Magic*), Adrian Sibar (*Planet of the Apes*) and Andy Owens (*Batman*). After Batgirl has an uncharacteristically bad effort against a mysterious villain, Oracle decides to take her on a vacation, which turns out to be everything but.

TRUE or FALSE

In an attempt to spread the Marvel brand name overseas in the mid-'90s, the Heroes of Ideas created their own pages of *Captain Canada* comics, starring Captain America, Captain Canada and even Captain Ventura!

FALSE - BEMSNB

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

CAPTAIN MARVEL

BATMAN
(DC)

Writer Jeph Loeb and artist Jim Lee offer up TWO Bat-brawls to end them all. In January's #611, Bats takes a trip to Metropolis and runs into Superman. "It's something all of fandom has been waiting for," teases Loeb. "A no-holds-barred [clash] between Batman and Superman that will answer once and for all, 'Who would win in a fight?' Hint: Batman cheats." Then in #613, another nagging question is answered when Batman takes on his arch-nemesis, the Joker: Why doesn't Bats just kill him already? (See page 58).

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
(Top Cow/Image)

G-Force finally finds out the truth behind Zoltar's attack on Central West as the "Under a Blood Red Sky" arc by Munier Sharrieff and Wilson Tortosa wraps up in February. In the next storyline, entitled "Second Encounters," a group of aliens from the planet Riga contacts Chief Anderson in an effort to form an alliance against the common enemy, Spectra. After that, Jason infiltrates a "speed tribe," whose members are the results of Zoltar's cruel experiments. And strap in for April's crossover with the Thundercats!

BIRDS OF PREY
(DC)

Indy veteran Gilbert Hernandez (*Love & Rockets*) takes over writing duties for Barbara Gordon and the lovely Birds of Prey with December's issue #50. Hernandez will team up with penciler Casey Jones for a six-issue storyarc that finds Black Canary taking on a raging elemental creature determined to take down the Birds. In June, writer Gail Simone (*Agent X*) and artist Ed Benes (*Gen*^{13}) take over the title, and fans can expect to see the Huntress joining up with the ladies during their run.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
(Dark Horse)

The first two issues of the year (#53-#54) wrap up the four-part "Viva Las Buffy" prequel storyarc, which shows a glimpse of Giles before he became Buffy's Watcher and also sees the origins of Buffy and Angel's love affair. Then in March, longtime *Buffy* cover artist Paul Lee gets a shot at writing and drawing an issue with "Dawn and Hoopy the Bear," a stand-alone story where Buffy's little sis, Dawn, receives a mysterious teddy bear that wreaks havoc on everything that crosses its path.

CAPTAIN AMERICA
(Marvel Knights/Marvel)

While regular artist John Cassaday takes a break, writer John Ney Rieber is joined by penciler Trevor Hairsine (*Cla$$war*) for a three-issue arc starting with January's issue #7. "The Extremist" finds Cap tracking down an old friend who's gone over the line into political extremism. In issue #11, artist Jae Lee (*Inhumans*) takes over for "Ice," a story that may ruffle some feathers with Cap buffs according to Ney Rieber, as the writer re-examines Cap's origin and the circumstances that led him to be trapped in ice for 40 years.

CAPTAIN MARVEL
(Marvel)

January's issue #5 and February's #6 by writer Peter David and artist ChrisCross

trends to watch

Name Game

Kevin Smith, Judd Winick and Ron Zimmerman are three writers who have been able to turn their celebrity status into successful comics writing gigs. With that in mind, here are some other celebrities we feel are destined to have a career in comics and the books they were born to write.

■ **The WIZARD Staff**

Felon–Winona Ryder
Alias–Prince
The Punisher–Johnny Knoxville
Deadman–Saddam Hussein
Hellspawn–Jack and Kelly Osbourne
The Hood–Eminem
House of Secrets–Bill Clinton
30 Days of Night–Ray Charles
Man-Thing–Rosie O'Donnell
Doctor Fate–Dr. Jack Kevorkian
Marvel Triple Action–Jenna Jameson
Out There–Anna Nicole Smith
Plastic Man–Michael Jackson
Batman–Barry Bonds
Queen & Country–Elton John
X-Man–RuPaul

ones to watch

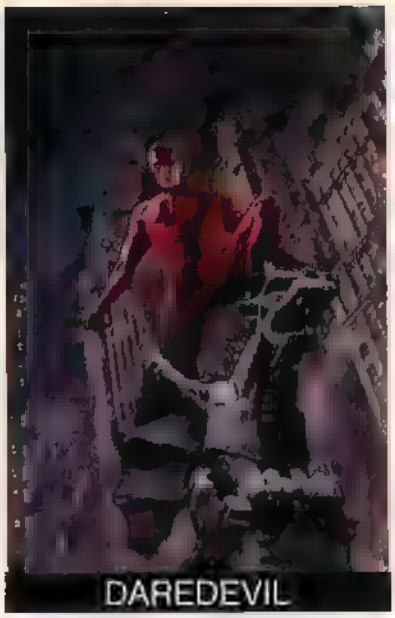
Trevor Hairsine

CLAIM TO FAME: After blowing away the indy circuit with a stellar run on Com.X Comics *Cla$$war*, Hairsine fills in the enormous shoes left behind by John Cassaday on Marvel Knights' *Captain America* when he takes over penciling duties with January's issue #8.

2003 BUZZ: Could we be bearing witness to the next UK-based artistic fan favorite, on par with Frank Quitely or Bryan Hitch? Take one look at Hairsine's gritty, über-realistic pencils from *Cla$$war* and it's tough to debate the 33-year-old Hairsine is a superstar in the making. Yet despite the above comparisons and his obvious talents, this resident of Sheffield, South Yorkshire remains humble: "Classify away," laughs Hairsine. "If I'm being placed in the same ballpark as those two then that's absolutely fine with me!"

DREAM PROJECT: When it comes to his personal dream project, Hairsine's shooting for the big guns. "I'd love to do the Hulk or Superman," hopes Hairsine. "The Hulk's a superb, tragic, exciting and humorous character, and I like to draw all of those qualities in equal measure. Superman's the original and still the coolest character. I'd want to darken him up a touch and have him let rip. Hard Superman. 'Don't mess with me' Superman."

2003 FORECAST: While Hairsine admits he's excited about drawing Cap, there are other comic projects on the horizon he's just as excited about reading. "My favorite comic right now has to be *The Ultimates*," he relates. "I'm also looking forward to the new release of *The Authority*, anything by Adam Hughes and the collection of *The Last American* from Com.X. Mike McMahon at his finest." ■ *CJ*



DAREDEVIL

FABLES

wrap up the title's first new storyarc since its relaunch and finally explains who's behind Captain Marvel's recent bout with insanity. But don't expect him to be any saner by the time the story ends. Then in March's issue #7, look for Thor to guest-star as Captain Marvel decides that, with his expanded powers, he too should be considered a god.

CATWOMAN
(DC)

Writer Ed Brubaker's hit series purrs on in 2003! Selina Kyle's closest friends and family are under attack by a mysterious adversary, and Catwoman won't sit idly by while her loved ones are terrorized. In January's issue #15, the Black Mask attacks Selina's sister, but will Catwoman save her in time? It all comes to a startling conclusion in issue #16. Issue #17 welcomes the pencils of Javier Pulido (*Human Target*) for a three-part storyarc about Selina dealing with the ramifications of the previous story's outcome.

DAREDEVIL
(Marvel)

Issues #41-#42 both ship in January and begin what writer Brian Michael Bendis calls "a giant crime arc split into two stories—and issue #41 will only cost a quarter." With artist Alex Maleev still on board, "Lowlife" introduces a new love interest for Matt Murdock and also shows just how emasculated Daredevil is now that most people believe his secret identity has been revealed. Then, issues #46-#50 ("Hardcore") tell the story of New York's gangs fighting over who controls the Kingpin's former crime empire.

THE DARKNESS
(Top Cow/Image)

After returning from the grave, Jackie Estacado attempts to put the pieces of his shattered existence back together and reunite with the Franchetti family in this relaunched series featuring the stunning pencils of Dale Keown (*The Incredible Hulk*). Unfortunately, he's beginning to realize the Darkness is evolving into something even more evil as he's plagued by visions of its past, present and future, and according to writer Paul Jenkins, things will only get worse over the course of the year.

ELEKTRA
(Marvel Knights/Marvel)

January's issue #20 by Greg Rucka and Carlo Pagulayan closes out the story that began with #11-#12, in which Elektra began redefining her life. "She thinks, 'I'm a super-ninja-killer-girl,'" says Rucka. "Is there any way to be a good guy? And do I want to be?" Also, look for the Hand to try and reclaim Elektra in issues #21-#22. Then, Robert Rodi (*Codename: Knockout*) and Sean Chen (*Wolverine*) (covers by Bill Sienkiewicz) take over as the book moves from Marvel Knights back into the mainstream Marvel Universe.

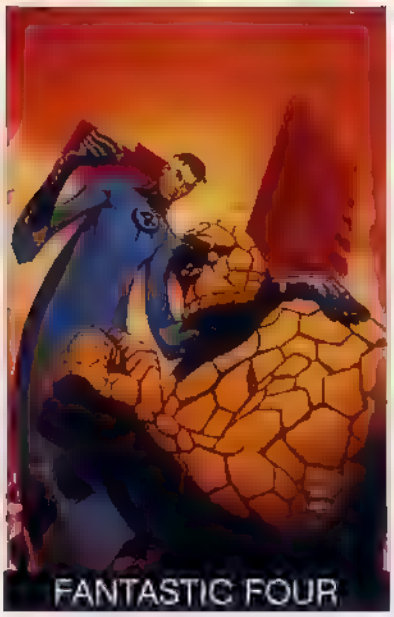
EXILES
(Marvel)

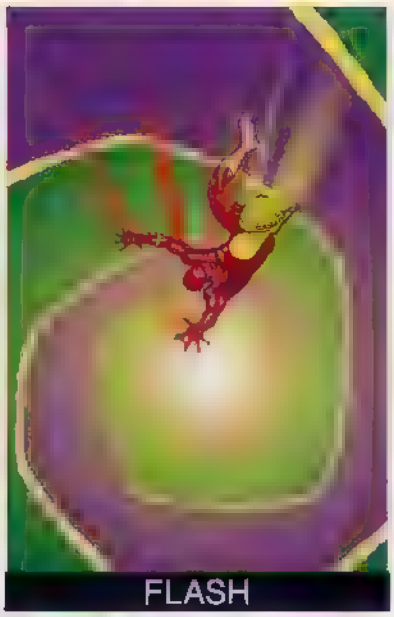
Writer Judd Winick and penciler Jim Calafiore begin part two of the "Legacy" story that they promise will change the Exiles forever as of

TRUE or FALSE

DC Comics' short-lived television series, "The Greatest American Hero," became the publisher's first successful live-action venture.

ANSWER: TRUE





January's issue #21. As the story ends in issue #22, one of the main characters will die and be replaced by a fan-favorite X-Men character that hasn't been seen in a while. With issues #23-24 in March and April, a new arc will focus on the Weapon X team of mutants led by Gambit as artist Kev Walker (*Legion*) fills in on pencils.

FABLES
(Vertigo/DC)

The five-part "Animal Farm" storyarc concludes in February's #10. Rose Red takes to the woods and goes toe to toe with lions, tigers, bears and fairy tale creatures, while Snow White learns the big city is nothing compared to the dangers of the upstate farm. *Fables* #11 is a one-shot starring Jack of Tales, and is written by series creator Bill Willingham and penciled by Bryan Talbot. In the works for the summer is the *Fables Annual*, which finds Snow and Bigby Wolf on yet another outrageous adventure.

FANTASTIC FOUR
(Marvel)

January's #65 kicks off a two-part story by writer Mark Waid and fill-in penciler Mark Buckingham, which follows Johnny Storm as he tries to become more involved with the business side of the FF's operations. Issues #67-#70 feature the return of regular penciler Mike Wieringo and Doctor Doom! Doom's re-emergence features a new look and a new attitude. "It's the grizzliest story of my career," says Waid with glee. Issue #71 will be extra-sized since it marks the FF's 500th issue.

FATHOM
(Top Cow/Image)

While Top Cow still seeks a writer to succeed creator Michael Turner, his protégé, Talent Caldwell, takes over as penciler with issue number #17. Fans can look forward to the debut of a mysterious "ninja-like" female who wields swords made of water and yet another mysterious race emerges from the darkest recesses of the ocean known as the Deep. And still bitter over his defeat last year, The Admiral is taking the people from under the sea apart—literally—in an effort to see what makes them tick.

FLASH
(DC)

January's #194 (the final ish of the "Run Riot" storyarc) finds the Scarlet Speedster trying to clean up the mess Gorilla Grodd made at Iron Heights, freeing every villain in the process. In issue #195, series creators Geoff Johns and Scott Kolins kick off a two-part storyarc starring revamped Flash villains Top and Peek-A-Boo. Beginning in #197, expect huge changes in the series, starting with the return of Professor Zoom in a four-issue storyline titled "Blitz," with a revelation in August's #201 that'll shake the title to its core.

THE FIRST
(CrossGen)

Finally together with Ingra, Pyrem wants nothing more than to enjoy a moment alone, but when the existence of the Negation is brought to his attention, the moment is lost in January's issue #27. In issue #28, now that the balance of power has shifted, there's a new alliance brewing, one that doesn't care about rules or traditions. In issue #29, Seahn is startled when Braag starts tearing up the streets of Elysia. But Braag is dead, and Seahn killed

trends to watch

Straight Arrow?

Writer and AIDS activist Judd Winick is well known for breaking down barriers and defying convention by including gay characters in his storylines, like in *Green Lantern* and *Exiles*. So who will be outed in *Green Arrow* when he takes over in March? ■ **The WIZARD Staff**

GREEN ARROW

A 40-ish bachelor with the last name of "Queen?" And don't even get us started on that fancy lad facial hair. But would DC allow Winick to out Green Arrow, one of their big guns? Maybe in an Elseworlds, but in this world, Ollie's still a straight shooter.

ODDS: 90-1

BLACK CANARY

Yeah, just TRY and make her gay.

ODDS: 80-1

ANIMAL

He's been a dope fiend, he's had kids out of wedlock with supervillains, has had said supervillains try to kill him AND as the original Speedy, had the crappiest–yet oddly appropriate–kid sidekick name in history. But can Roy Harper be gay? It ain't happenin'...probably.

ODDS: 25-1

SPEEDY

Teen sidekick-wannabe Mia Dearden is cut, spunky and–most importantly–not heavily merchandised by her parent company AOL/Time Warner. Yeah, we're bettin' a heavy dose of Melissa Etheridge in her CD player.

ODDS: 10-1

CONNOR HAWKE

He's well spoken, neat, in shape and spent his entire young life dressed in robes and surrounded by monks. Winner, winner, chicken dinner!

ODDS: 5-1

HAL JORDAN

Ollie's one-time bestest friend has two strikes against him. First, Hal was all man. Just ask Pie Face every time Jordan stole his date. Second, he's the Wrath of God now and we all know the Church's stance on...on...actually, this almost makes sense.

ODDS: 1-1

ones to watch

Bob Layton

CLAIM TO FAME: An industry veteran, Layton is best known for his classic run on Marvel's *Iron Man* and his work at Valiant Comics. Presently, the writer/artist/businessman is busy with his independent publishing venture, Future Comics.

2003 BUZZ: After brief freelance stints, Layton realized things weren't jibing well with him. "Something inside wasn't accepting it," he relates. "I was inking two books a month, which is a big load, and I was just miserable with the stuff I was doing. And not because it was necessarily bad; it was because I was emotionally detached from it." Eventually, Layton and longtime friends and collaborators David Michelinie and Dick Giordano formed Future Comics.

With its flagship title, *Freemind*, about a paraplegic who builds an artificial body that gives him superhuman abilities, Layton's goal is to provide not just great comics, but great mainstream entertainment.

"We're creating entertainment that can be read by a wider audience than who normally reads comics," he states.

DREAM PROJECT: For Layton, this is his dream. "When you think about it, I have total creative freedom," he says. "I'm working with two guys I've worked with for 30 years. We understand each other, and we're all pretty much on the same page."

2003 FORECAST: Layton hopes Future Comics receives more public recognition in the coming year. "I'm looking at this point to be profitable and yet try to maintain something," explains the industry vet. "I really want to try to create the Rolls Royce of superhero lines, something where the quality is always maintained at a very high level." ■ JMcD

Layton: Al Gropp

G.I. JOE

HELLBOY

him, so who is this rampaging god? In issue #30 no one's sure if Ingra is in House Dexter with or without a sinister motive, but Persha is going to make sure Ingra won't interfere with her plans.

G.I. JOE
(Devil's Due/Image)

January's issue #14 kicks off with a little barhopping when Joe members Rock-n-Roll and Mutt meet up with old friends, Alpine and Bazooka. But all isn't what it seems when their watering hole turns out to be a Cobra den! In issue #16, Cover Girl returns to team up with Spirit to search for a missing child with strange ties to that monocle-wearing maniac, Dr. Mindbender. Also, both Flint and Baroness find themselves abducted by a group of criminals who may have it in for both sides.

GREEN ARROW
(DC)

Brad Meltzer ends his run with a "shocking" conclusion to "The Archer's Quest" storyline (January's #21), which DC sources cite will completely change the dynamic of the series. Scott Beatty (*Gotham Knights*) fills in with a one-shot about the return of Count Vertigo (#22), and in March, *Green Arrow* goes weekly when Ben Raab and Judd Winick team up for the five-part "Black Circle: Urban Knights" storyarc that will completely change the way the DCU functions.

GREEN LANTERN
(DC)

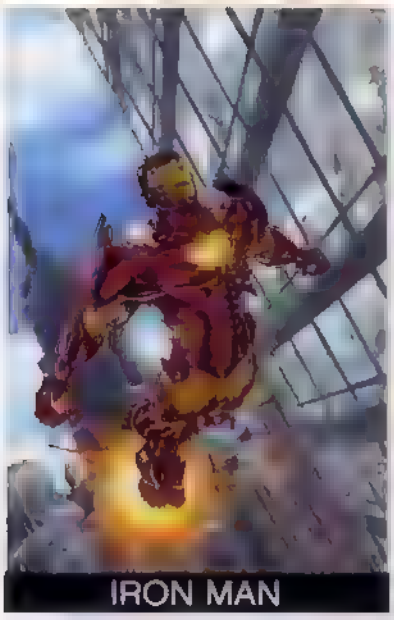
January's #158 kicks off a two-part storyarc that finds Kyle Rayner taking a trip to the planet Oa, which leads him to investigate an intergalactic nomad race's trouble with big rock monsters! In #160, a new major player is introduced to the GL fold in a storyline that runs 'til #164. New series writer Ben Raab takes over for the departing Judd Winick with issue #165, and kicks off his run with a six-part storyarc that finds all of the past GLs talking to the future GLs.

HARLEY QUINN
(DC)

It's a whole new direction for Harley, thanks to the new creative team of writer Andy Lieberman and penciler Mike Huddleston. Harley's revamped status quo ("less anti-hero and more straight-up villain," says Huddleston) kicked off last November, and in January's issue #28, several shady characters from her past are stalking her. In later issues, Harley will once again set up shop as a psychiatrist—doling advice only an insane super criminal could give.

HAWKMAN
(DC)

Issues #11-#12 wrap up Hawkman and Hawkgirl's confrontation with Hath-Set in the mountains of Tibet. Then in March's #13, it's back to St. Roch to solve the mystery of who killed Kendra "Hawkgirl" Saunder's parents, written by regular series writer Geoff Johns and drawn by guest penciler Ethan Van Sciver. Regular artist Rag Morales returns with issue #15, featuring the triumphant return of Shayera Thal, the original Hawkwoman! Sparks fly when



IRON MAN

JSA

she runs into Hawkgirl, and fans will be treated to a Thanagarian catfight of epic proportions.

HELLBOY
(Dark Horse)

February brings *Hellboy: Weird Tales*, an all-new series where top creators—including John Cassaday, Leinil F. Yu and Alex Maleev—offer up their takes on the Beast of the Apocalypse. Debuting in March is *The Art of Hellboy by Mike Mignola*, a 200-page hardcover graphic novel that collects a decade's worth of Mignola's sketches. And be sure to keep an eye out in early summer for new B.P.R.D. one-shots. (No word on the next *Hellboy* mini-series at press time.)

INCREDIBLE HULK
(Marvel)

January's *Incredible Hulk* #49 wraps up writer Bruce Jones and penciller Stuart Immonen's latest storyarc as Bruce Banner tries to exonerate himself in a murder he didn't commit. Then, new artist Mike Deodato Jr. begins regular penciling duties with issue #50 (see preview on pg. 38), which also reintroduces the Abomination as a major Hulk baddie in a story that will run until summer. "If you don't know the Abomination, it doesn't matter," assures *Hulk* editor Axel Alonso. "After this story, you'll know him enough to fear him."

IRON MAN
(Marvel)

January's #64 is part two of the three-part "Standoff" storyline by Mike Grell and artist Alan Davis, crossing over with *Avengers* #63 and *Thor* #58. Issue #65 begins a five-part epic that will tie up many of the loose ends of Grell's first year on *Iron Man*, including how Tony Stark is dealing with the world knowing his identity. Also, a bomb made from his company's technology is used in a terrorist attack at the Chinese embassy, and it's up to Iron Man to find out how that was possible.

JLA
(DC)

Aquaman writer Rick Veitch joins series penciler Doug Mahnke for January's issue #77, which finds DC's premier super-squad taking on a mysterious foe who's stealing their memories. Then in February, regular series writer Joe Kelly returns with the new team lineup spawned from 2002's "Obsidian Age" storyarc. With the new team set, the JLA must take on a menace that's threatening to destroy an entire planetary system. Meanwhile, see what Plastic Man, Kyle Rayner, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter have been doing now that they're off the team.

JSA
(DC)

The ongoing feud between Black Adam and Captain Marvel escalates in January's issue #44. February kicks off a six-part storyarc by the regular team of Geoff Johns and Leonard Kirk. The JSA face off against the combined efforts of Mordru and Obsidian. In May, look for *JSA All Stars*, a 12-issue maxi-series starring the current and classic incarnations of the Justice Society. Each issue contains a backup tale from some of the biggest names in comics, including stories by Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale, and Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso.

LEGION
(DC)

2003 marks the 45th anniversary of the *Legion of Superheroes*, and series co-writers Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning have big plans in

trends to watch

Dollars and Sense

In 2002, the comic industry stepped up its efforts to bring in more readers with some great promotional events, including 10-cent comics, 9-cent comics and Free Comic Book Day. Now comes word that Marvel intends to offer a top-tiered book for just 25 cents every quarter in 2003. Spotting a trend when we see one, we compiled our top 10 choices for other promotions we hope get implemented.
■ The WIZARD Staff

10. Keep Whatever You Can Carry from Your Comic Store Owner's Beard Day!
9. Buy Three Comics, Get a Free Egg Breakfast Day!
8. Guns for comics! Exchange a handgun–no questions asked–and get a free over-ordered comic of your choice!
7. Free Comics the Day After Free Comics Day!
6. In an effort to get bulk amounts of their comics to the masses, CrossGen does a promo where they drop thousands of copies of *Scion* from a blimp during halftime at the Super Bowl. It'll make headlines by mistakenly dropping the comics by the case!
5. Jim Lee Draws Everything Month!
4. Guess How Many "F" Words Are in This Month's Issue of *Alias* and Win a Guest Role as a Jail Rape Victim in an Upcoming Issue Day!
3. Give a Hooker a Comic Day!
2. Free Copy of *Dark Knight 2* Day!
1. Return Your Free Copy of *Dark Knight 2* Day!

ones to watch

Brian K. Vaughan

CLAIM TO FAME: The 26-year-old Vaughan boasts a résumé that includes writing gigs on *Batman* and *Swamp Thing*, though his star status solidified in 2002 with the wildly popular *Y–The Last Man* for Vertigo/DC.

2003 BUZZ: Vaughan has slowly built a reputation as a writer who spins thought-provoking stories that take everyday questions like "What would you do if you were the last man on Earth?" and flip them upside down. With that in mind, Vaughan plans to continue surprising comic readers with more issues of *Y–The Last Man* in 2003, as well as a new, as-yet-untitled, creator owned, sci-fi political thriller through Homage Comics/WildStorm/DC. And although Vaughan has two new projects in the works over at Marvel, he prefers to keep a lid on them for the time being.

DREAM PROJECT: According to Vaughan, he's living the dream thanks to *Y* and the success around it. "Writing a creator-owned book at Vertigo is something I've wanted to do since high school," gushes Vaughan. "I'd also like to write a Spidey story before I die, and it would be great to work on *Batman* again."

2003 FORECAST: Vaughan has a host of things he's looking forward to. "Everything Beadle, Ruoka and Ennis are writing in 2003, especially their creator-owned stuff," says Vaughan. "I think Dave Gibbons' upcoming Vertigo graphic novel *The Originals* looks cool as hell, and I'm really, really excited that Paul Chadwick's doing more *Concrete* this year. Oh, and I can't wait for Top Shelf to publish Alan Moore's *Lost Girls*. Arrgh, I know I'm forgetting a ton of other awesome crap, too…" ■ *CS*

store for the protectors of the 30th century. In January's #16, it's up to Brin Londo (a.k.a. Timber Wolf) to save his fellow Legionnaires from the clutches of the Fatal Five. Then, a two-part story ("Revival of the Fittest") featuring the debut of up-and-coming penciler Alejandro Barrionuevo. After that, fans will see "a major villain no one thought we'd have the balls to bring back," crows Lanning.

MERIDIAN
(CrossGen)

In January's issue #32, Sephie makes good on a promise she made to the kids of Akasia, doing a good deed for another island in the process. In #33, Jad takes the stage and pushes Sephie entirely out of her tide for what will be his last battle off the surface coast. In #34, en route to Sheristan, Sephie faces a major crisis and must do something drastic to keep her mission on target. In #35, fans see what Ilahn's been up to during his time undercover and how it will undercut Sephie in the future.

NEW X-MEN
(Marvel)

"Riot at Xavier's," by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, continues in January's issue #136 as a group of students at Xavier's school take over the joint, confront the X-Men and kidnap Xavier! Issue #139 welcomes artist Phil Jimenez and begins the "Murder at Xavier's" storyarc that finally resolves the Jean Grey/Scott Summers/Emma Frost love triangle, and according to editor Mike Marts, it's "an ending that will have fans talking for years." Summer sees a story that explores more of Wolverine's past in the Weapon Plus program.

NIGHTWING
(DC)

Here's what to expect from writer Devin Grayson and penciler Patrick Zircher in 2003: Heads roll at the Bludhaven Police Department when Nightwing hands over Mary Redhorn's journals (which contain juicy tidbits on the BPD) to the proper authorities. All of the bad apples are then purged from the police force, but then strangely, the cops left over begin acting more violent and dangerous than ever. Meanwhile, one of the DCU's deadliest assassins shows up in town—and he knows Nightwing's secret identity!

100 BULLETS
(Vertigo/DC)

After January's stand-alone issue catches up with ex-Minuteman Wylie, Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso bring back a familiar face in February's issue #43—Loop Hughes. Last we saw him, Loop was escorted by the cops from his father's funeral after being charged with murder, and during this three-issue storyarc, readers see how Loop has been passing the time in prison. It all leads up to September's #50, as most of the cast converges for an epic battle that will leave one major player dead.

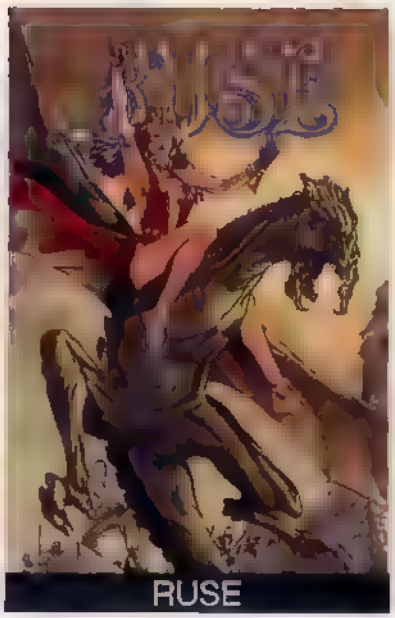
THE PATH
(CrossGen)

January through June's issues #11-#16 by Ron Marz and Bart Sears make up one huge arc. Obo-san has turned his back on his faith and now possesses the Weapon of Heaven.

TRUE or FALSE

Former Marvel Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter sold his first comic to DC Comics at the age of 13.

ANSWER: TRUE. It was a version of Superboy's story in Adventure Comics #246.



War seems inevitable, but will Obo-san have the courage to use the Weapon, even if it means risking the destruction of his homeland? Plus, the return of the warlord Todosi. Sears steps aside with issue #13 to concentrate on his duties as CrossGen's art director, turning the penciling reins over to Matthew Smith (*Day of Judgment*)

RISING STARS
(Joe's Comics/Top Cow/Image)

This summer, Straczynski's real-world superhero saga comes to an end as the rise and the fall of the Specials concludes. Two of the most powerful Specials, Brody (the smartest) and Poet (the strongest), form an uneasy alliance that promises to have a severe impact on the lives of every remaining Special on the face of the earth. Meanwhile, Ravenshadow makes the most shocking move of all when he attempts to run for president of the United States.

ROBIN
(DC)

Robin and Spoiler's tumultuous relationship once again comes to the forefront, starting with January's issue #111. Created by the regular team of Jon Lewis and Pete Woods, Steph pours her heart out to the Boy Wonder about her life, family and the death of her father, the reformed villain formerly known as the Cluemaster. Issues #112- #114 follow Robin as he investigates an influx of guns into Gotham City, only to wind up in the middle of Pennsylvania, while the Spoiler investigates how and where her father died.

RUSE
(CrossGen)

January's #16 and February's #17 by writer Scott Beatty and artist Butch Guice is a two-part tale, following detective Simon Archard's efforts to overcome his recent injuries and press on his quest to find the mastermind behind the Baleen shipwreckings. An important character's origin will also be revealed in port and fans will visit the birthplace of Partington's gaggle of gargoyles. Future issues will delve into more traditional mysteries, including a case of mistaken identity, a classic "locked room" whodunit and the apparent "haunting" of Simon's rebuilt residence.

SAVAGE DRAGON
(Image)

You can't keep a good cop down, even if you maim him, kill him or trap him in an alternate universe. And with a track record like that, *Dragon* creator Erik Larsen has no intention of easing up on ol' Pinhead. "In the immediate future, I'll be throwing the Savage Dragon head-first into the all-new Image Universe," he explains. "Beyond that, I'm sure there'll be some really cool fights. Oh, and the villains are going to be in very poor taste. That much I know."

SOJOURN
(CrossGen)

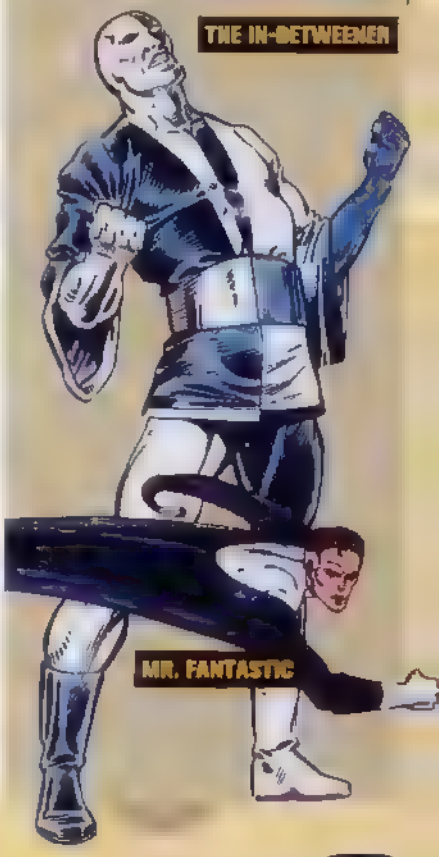
Following January's special all-splash-page issue #19 written by Ron Marz and featuring Greg Land's stunning artwork, Arwyn continues her quest south with Mordath's trolls hot on her heels. Her search for the third fragment in issues #20-#24 continues as she travels to the desert wastes of Oudubai, where a savage race of non-human nomads awaits her. Along the way, she'll pick up a couple of traveling companions.

trends to watch

Adults Only

2002 was a banner year for mature-themed comics—in fact, some of the hottest books of the year were titles no one born after 1985 could technically read (though we know there are a bunch of you underage whippersnappers who did). *Alias*, *Fables*, *Y–The Last Man*, *30 Days of Night* and *100 Bullets* topped quite a few must-read lists, so we couldn't help but wonder, Is this a trend? We couldn't leave well enough alone, so we did a little research and discovered a slew of comics characters whose very NAMES scream "Adult Content" and should therefore get their own mature-reader book. Oh, and if you're under 17, turn the page right now. ■ The WIZARD Staff

- Angar the Screamer
- Black Goliath
- Bone
- Bushmaster
- Colossus
- Deathblow
- Elongated Man
- Hourman
- The In-Betweener
- Iron Fist
- Lockjaw
- Longshot
- Mister Fantastic
- Mister Terrific
- Moon-Boy
- Mother Box
- The Punisher
- Shaft
- The Shaggy Man
- Starfinger
- Woodgod



ones to watch

Daniel Way

CLAIM TO FAME: He's Marvel editor Axel Alonso's hand-picked creator to watch. With one of the funniest *Spider-Man: Tangled Web* stories to hit stands in 2002 (issues #16–#17), it's clear this North Carolina-based writer is well on his "way" to comic book success.

2003 BUZZ: With a reputation among industry pros as the "Kid Rock of comics," Way has slowly made a name for himself to match the endearing moniker by writing gritty streetwise stories mixed with over-the-top humor in the same vein as Garth Ennis. That said, when the 25-year-old writer takes over *Wolverine* for a three-issue stint starting with March's issue #187 (which finds Wolvie in rural West Virginia taking on a bunch of backwoods hicks), it'll be a pairing fans have long been waiting for. Way also has a few issues of *Agent X* in the works, which will more than likely be the final issues of the series before it goes to comic book heaven. In addition to all of this, be sure to check out his soon-to-be-released, self-published graphic novel *Gun Theory*, which has already garnered some good buzz in the small press.

DREAM PROJECT: Way would like to take on *Wolverine* full-time, and he'd also like to reinvigorate one of Spider-Man's deadliest villains. "I'd love to do a Venom story," says Way. "That would be the kind of book I could really stretch on, just because the guy's a f—ing psychopath."

2003 FORECAST: "I think Greg Rucka's going to do a good job [when he takes over] *Wolverine*," predicts Way, on one of the things he's looking forward to in 2003. "I also just recently read the entire run of *The Ultimates*, and I thought, 'Man, this is the coolest superhero comic I've ever read,' so I'm looking forward to more of that. I'm totally down with that book." ■ *CJ*

STAR WARS

SUPERMAN: BIRTHRIGHT

SOLUS
(CrossGen)

Andra Radiant, the hero of Heliotrope, is finally revealed to the millions of curious watchers who have followed her adventures for years in March's *Solus* #1 by Barbara Kesel and George Pérez. In issue #2, Andra visits Ayden of Quin, who gives her a gift endowed with a familiar orange energy, while in issue #3, Brath Mac Garen, from the pages of *Brath*, finds himself confronted by a powerful stranger, and the encounter leaves him permanently changed.

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS
(Marvel)

January's issue #49 of *Amazing Spider-Man* by J. Michael Straczynski and John Romita Jr. continues the return of Peter Parker's estranged wife, Mary Jane, with a huge revelation in February's issue #50. In *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*, January's issue # 52 by Zeb Wells and Francisco Herrera wraps up Spider-Man's two-part fight with the Shocker and Hydro-Man. Issues #53–#55 find a group of rich businessmen putting a bounty on Spider-Man's head and a number of top villains all vying to be the one to take home the pot.

STAR WARS BOOKS
(Dark Horse)

February's *Star Wars: Jedi Mace Windu* finds the warrior watching his army of knights and padawans choose sides in the coming Clone Wars. Meanwhile, an old threat reappears who'll give the Jedi a few headaches. This story officially bridges the gap between "Episode II" and "Episode III." Then, in *Star Wars: Empire* #6, Princess Leia holds the fate of the Rebel Alliance in her hands. Finally, *Star Wars: Republic* #51 features two Jedi, 100 clone troopers and thousands of dead Gungans—what can else can you ask for?

SUPERMAN
(DC)

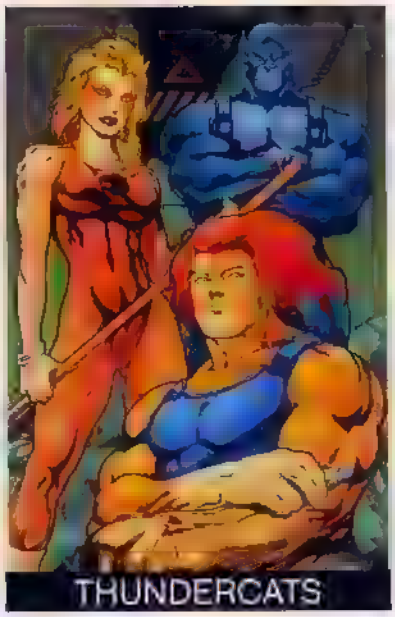
January's *Superman: The 10-Cent Adventure* introduces the new creative team of writer Steve Seagle and artist Scott McDaniel, as well as a villain from Superman's past. Then in issue #190, Superman must stop a Metropolis robot that thinks it's a flesh-and-blood police officer. In March's #191, the Flash makes a guest appearance, and in April, a new hero arrives in Metropolis. In February, look for *Metropolis*, a 12-issue maxi-series by Chuck Austen and Danijel Zezelj. In it, Jimmy Olsen explores dark corners of Metropolis still affected by the Brainiac 13 technology.

SUPERMAN: BIRTHRIGHT
(DC)

Mark Waid (*Fantastic Four*) and Leinil Francis Yu (*Wolverine, High Roads*) combine their titanic talents to re-imagine the Man of Steel's origins. In this 12-issue maxi-series launching in spring, readers will follow Superman's roots, from his escape from the doomed Krypton, to being raised by the Kents in Smallville,

TRUE or FALSE

TRANSFORMERS



THUNDERCATS

Kan., to his eventual emergence as Metropolis' Favorite Son. According to Waid, "The goal is to tell the Story—with a capital 'S'—of Superman. When this story's done, you should be able to hand this to any kid from Boston to Botswana when they ask you 'Who is Superman?'"

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURLES
(Dreamwave)

Everybody's heroes on a half shell are back...well sort of. Closely based on Fox's new animated series, things kick off with a five-issue storyarc by Peter David and Pat Lee. A fan of the property since his younger days, Lee promises the most action-packed Turtles book to date. "I'm reaching deep into my bag of tricks for this one," he laughs. "I'm drawing inspiration from my favorite action anime to capture guys like Casey and Raphael. I really want to capture what makes these guys true badasses."

THOR
(Marvel)

Issue #58 by Dan Jurgens and Alan Davis is the title's crossover with *Iron Man* #64 and *Avengers* #63 before two issues ship in February. *Thor* #59 is a stand-alone issue by Christopher Priest and Trent Kaniuga that focuses on the belief in gods, while *Thor* #60 begins a Dan Jurgens arc featuring how Thor's presence has affected people's lives since he moved Asgard directly over Manhattan. In March's #61, Ben and Ray Lai (*Radix*) take over regular art duties.

THUNDERBOLTS
(Marvel)

February's *Thunderbolts* #76 introduces a new creative team and a new direction for the title. Writer John Arcudi and penciler Francisco Ruiz Velasco step in and introduce The Battler, a new villain created for the series. The baddie is released from prison and joins an after-hours "Fight Club"-style boxing program. "After these guys get out of jail they can go straight, go back to crime or...well, there's a third option and this is it," says series editor Andrew Lis.

THUNDERCATS
(WildStorm/DC)

February's *Thundercats: The Return*, by Ford Lytle Gilmore, Ed Benes and Joe Pimentel, is a five-issue mini that jumps ahead five years and finds Lion-O in a world where the evil Mumm-Ra has taken over. Then in April, check out the five-issue *Thundercats: Hammerhand's Revenge* by Fiona Avery and Carlos D'Anda. The Berserkers, who'd already got their butts handed to them by the 'Cats, return with a vengeance. And don't forget the upcoming crossover with *Battle of the Planets*, shipping in April!

TRANSFORMERS BOOKS
(Dreamwave)

January's *Transformers Armada* #7 by Simon Furman and Pat Lee concludes the story of the Land Military Team—can they help the Autobots win this round against Megatron? In May, look for an *Optimus Prime* mini-series by Chris Sarracini and James Raiz in which a wayward Prime leaves on a mission of self-discovery. October's *Generation One* ongoing debuts an all-new storyline by Sarracini and Pat Lee and features the Transformers rallying to defend Earth against Unicron. Also,

trends to watch

Gone Hollywood

With a host of comic-based movies coming in 2003, we dissected the cast lists and realized that some of the actors chosen for particular roles are spot on. Patrick Stewart as Professor Xavier in "X-Men 2"? Genius. Eric Bana as Bruce Banner in "The Hulk"? Good choice. Sean Connery as Allan Quatermain in "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen"? Born to play him.

So that got us thinking. Surely there are other comic characters out there with actors who were born to play them in the movies. Oh yes, it's time for another list. ■ **The WIZARD Staff**

Black Panther	Will Smith
Brother Power the Geek	Jimmy Fallon
Liberty Meadows	Jennifer Love Hewitt
Phantom Lady	Rebecca Romijn-Stamos
Sandman	Guy Pearce
Scarlet Witch	Melina Kanakaredes

Scott Eaton (Black Panther), Will Smith, Brother Power & Kanakaredes courtesy of Sweets Collection

ones to watch

Skottie Young

CLAIM TO FAME: Skottie Young's unique stylings have graced the pages of Marvel's *Iceman* #3, *X-Men Unlimited* #37 and the Mangaverse *Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider Clan* mini-series. His street, graffiti-inspired art has opened some eyes, including that of Pat Lee, who signed him up to do a cover for an upcoming issue of *Arkanum*.

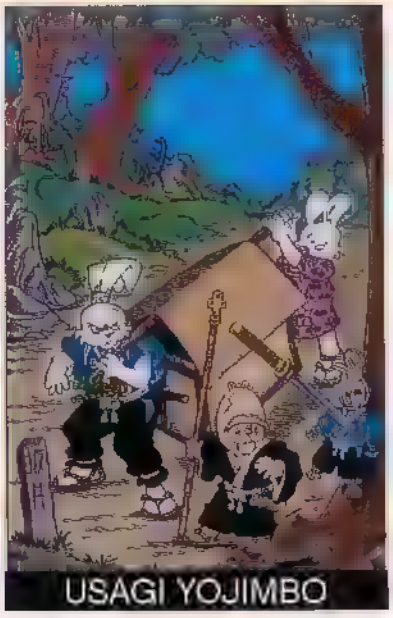
2003 BUZZ: The 24-year-old Chicago native's urban/animated hybrid art has breathed new life into the Mangaverse's version of the wall-crawler, making it one of the most original-looking books to hit in quite some time. Young's rendition of Felicia Hardy in *Spider Clan*–complete with baggy hip huggers, spike collar and 'brow ring–is the cat's meow.

"I get to do a lot of things in this book that would be taboo in a lot of the other Spider-Man titles. I mean, what other Spidey comic could get away with cutting Felicia Harding in half in the first issue!"

DREAM PROJECT: "Chris Bachalo is the creator I would love to colab with," confides Young. "His imagination blows me away!" His ultimate dream project? *Steampunk*. "In my version of a perfect world, Chris Bachalo would decide to do other things, but still carry on *Steampunk* with a new artist! Of course, Joe Kelly would still be on the writing end."

2003 FORECAST: Young is looking forward to more of Dark Horse/Studio Proteus' release of Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell II: Man-Machine Interface*, the sequel to one of the most widely known anime and mangas in the world. Although he would have loved to have seen more balance between the computer-generated and hand-drawn art, Young says he does "see it as a huge step toward a level we can take comics in the future with some experimentation." ■ JMcD

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN



USAGI YOJIMBO

look for the hardcover collection of the first *Transformers* mini-series in January.

THE ULTIMATES
(Marvel)

January's issue #9 sees Captain America go after Hank Pym for his domestic assault on The Wasp, resulting in an action-packed climax in issues #11-#12 that writer Mark Millar says will make "the fight with the Hulk in issue #5 look like the Powerpuff Girls." Then, look for Millar and artist Bryan Hitch to begin a new arc in the spring that will see two of the team fall in love, reveal the truth about Thor and introduce Ultimate Captain Britain and the Ultimate Defenders. Plus, there's a wedding!

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN
(Marvel)

January's issues #34-#35 by writer Brian Michael Bendis and penciler Mark Bagley will continue the "Ultimate Venom" storyline and reveal the secret project Peter Parker's father was working on and how it ties in to Venom's origin. Also, look for Spider-Man to confront Nick Fury from the pages of *The Ultimates* in issue #39 and Aunt May to go to therapy. "After that, we'll introduce the first original Ultimate Spider-Man villain," teases Bendis, referring to issues #40-#41

ULTIMATE X-MEN
(Marvel)

January's *Ultimate X-Men* #27 by Mark Millar and Adam Kubert begins Millar's last arc on the title. "America is under siege by a number of anti-human mutant cells carrying out awful acts of terrorism," relates Millar. "This is the first time we've seen Magneto since the first story. Terror suspects are being held in Camp X-Factor down in Cuba, the X-Men have disbanded, Charles is missing, Cyclops is presumed dead and mankind has six months to hand the planet over to homo-superior. Oh, and Phoenix is back, too."

UNCANNY X-MEN
(Marvel)

Issues #417-#418 by Chuck Austen and Kia Asamiya ship in January. Archangel decides to get back into corporate life but encounters a mutant menace in one of his own companies. Also, there's a new romance on the team, and Iceman explores the furthest reaches of his powers. Two issues in April (#421-#422) as artist Ron Garney returns. A long lost X-Man returns and Alpha Flight arrives. May's books will loosely tie into the events of "X-Men 2," which opens May 3

USAGI YOJIMBO
(Dark Horse)

January's *Usagi Yojimbo* #63 features the much-anticipated return of Kitsune, the beautiful thief, but this time she's become the target of a local gangster. February's issue #64 sees Usagi and son Jotaro joined by a new character, a jovial old priest named Tomago. However, the fun doesn't last after

X-STATIX

Y-THE LAST MAN

the trio run into a merchant who's been marked for death, and they are all soon attacked by all sorts of baddies.

WITCHBLADE
(Top Cow/Image)

Make room for Magdalena, who shows up this spring. "She may be able to help, if the Witchblade lets her," teases writer David Wohl. "This storyline will introduce a major new villain and at the same time touch upon older continuity that's been left dangling." Later in 2003, look for the Ian Nottingham special by Wohl and Keu Cha. While embroiled in a murder mystery in Japan, assassin Nottingham hits an unexpected bump in the road when his gauntlet shows him the spirits of everyone he's ever killed.

WOLVERINE
(Marvel)

January's issue #185 and February's issue #186 wrap up writer Frank Tieri and artist Sean Chen's run on the title before newcomer Daniel Way (*Tangled Web*) fills in for a three-issue arc between March's issue #187 and April's issues #188-#189, which see Logan stuck in West Virginia during a bootlegging war between two rival families. After that, look for writer Greg Rucka (*Elektra*) and penciler Darick Robertson (*Transmetropolitan*) to take over the title with May's issue #190 (see item on page 61)

WONDER WOMAN
(DC)

January's issue #188 concludes Phil Jimenez and Andy Lanning's run on the series and wraps up all of the plotlines, including WW's relationship with erstwhile boyfriend, Trevor Barnes. Issue #189 kicks off the "The Game of the Gods" storyarc by Walter Simonson, Jerry Ordway and P. Craig Russell. Wonder Woman finds herself completely powerless, fighting off bizarre creatures in the Cryptocombs, the cemetery of the Gods. It culminates with a battle against a baddie called the Shattered God. Writer Greg Rucka (*Elektra*) takes over the title in July.

X-STATIX
(Marvel)

January's issue #7 by writer Peter Milligan and artist Mike Allred continues a three-part story through February's #8. Issues #9-#10 will be stand-alone issues before *X-Statix* takes a one-month hiatus in May while *Wolverine/Doop* #1 and #2 by Milligan and Darwyn Cooke fills in for the series. "Then in *X-Statix* #11, a storyarc begins that will have massive bloodshed," offers editor Axel Alonso. "There will be a high-noon showdown that'll have you reaching for your hanky."

Y—THE LAST MAN
(Vertigo/DC)

The five-issue storyarc "Cycles" marches on, with part two shipping in January. Yorick Brown, the last man on Earth, makes his way through a seemingly utopian town with a horrible secret, which series writer Brian K. Vaughan bets "no one will correctly guess what it is." May's #11 begins "One Small Step," which Vaughan hints "will involve a few occupants of the International Space Station, who've been trapped in orbit since the plague killed all the men on Earth." Artist Pia Guerra continues as penciler on the book

trends to watch

Ho-Lee!

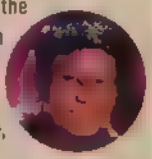
Last year may have been the Year of the Horse, but in 2003, it'll be the Year of Lee! Here's what the famous Lees in comics have got going for the year ahead. ■ **The WIZARD Staff**

STAN LEE The Father of Marvel Comics is taking his kids to court over profits from the "Spider-Man" movie. Says "Excelsior!" a lot.

JIM LEE One of the most popular and influential artists of the '90s returns with his mage intact on DC's top-selling Batman series. Still expected to be asked to sketch Wolverine a lot by fans during the 2003 convention season.

PAT LEE Showed there's more than meets the eye with dusty old '80s properties with mega-successful *Transformers* series. Hopes to fully break out of his shell with Dreamwave's upcoming *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* relaunch. Is now turtley enough for the Turtle Club.

JAE LEE Poised to heat up the market and fanboy's tempers with the controversial "Ice" storyline in Captain America, which may revamp Cap's origin. Anticipates being sick of "Ice, Ice, Baby" jokes by March.



ANG LEE Hopes to smash box-office records with June's "Hulk" flick and avoid "You wouldn't like me when I'm Ang Lee" headlines.

LEE BERMEJO Hot off the erotically titled *Batman/Deathblow* series, rockets over to *Action Comics* for its explosive #800 issue. Currently getting pointers from Bill Sienkiewicz on getting fans to pronounce his name correctly.

ALVIN LEE Set to hang ten on the nostalgia wave with Top Cow's upcoming *Battle of the Planets/Thundercats* crossover. No sign of Simon or Theodore.

LEE MAJORS Currently watching reruns of "The Fall Guy" on FX. Still has the toughest eyebrows in Hollywood.

THE GENERAL LEE 20% increase of moonshine smuggling from Hazzard County to Chickasaw County from 2002 to 2003.

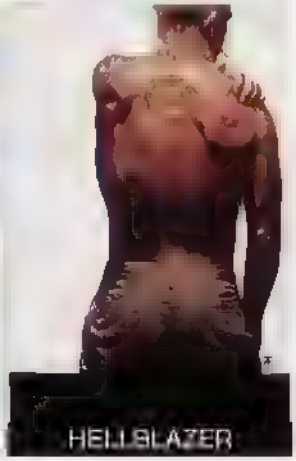
LEE VAN CLEEF Eating Fritos and looking back on glory days of fighting ninjas with that Van Patten kid.

ALSO IN 2003

BLACK PANTHER

CRUX

DETECTIVE COMICS


HELLBLAZER

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS/THUNDERCATS (Top Cow/Image, WildStorm/DC) Two of the hottest retro books collide! Each of the four one-shots (two by WildStorm's Kaare Andrews, and two by Top Cow's Munier Sharrieff and Alvin Lee) feature covers by Alex Ross and J. Scott Campbell.

BLACK PANTHER (Marvel) January's #53 by Christopher Priest and Jorge Lucas finds readers in the middle of the "Black and White" storyline as T'Challa returns to find the new Black Panther prowling the streets of New York.

BRATH (CrossGen) Issue #1 debuts in January. Brath Mac Garen is the leader of a savage clan whose land falls under attack by endless legions of soldiers sent by an evil emperor.

BRIGHT (Joe's Comics/Top Cow/Image) Spinning off from *Rising Stars*, this February mini-series follows supercop Matthew Bright's early days in the NYPD. By Fiona Avery and Dan Jurgens and overseen by creator J. Michael Straczynski.

CEREBUS (Aardvark Vanaheim) With only 14 issues of Dave Sim's epic left, the aardvark barbarian continues his wild journey toward his inevitable end. January's issue #286 serves as the final chapter of "Chasing YHWH."

CRUX (CrossGen) Aristophanes awakens a few Atlanteans and makes trouble for Capricia, then a new, bigger, badder Negation invasion threatens all the Atlanteans, but only if everyone survives the return of Terra Cognito.

DEATHMASK (Future Comics) A Native American shaman is the victim of organized crime and pays a dark price to gain mystical, supernatural powers to exact his revenge. Launches early 2003.

DETECTIVE COMICS (DC) In January, a deadly serial killer's on the loose, and ex-Commish Jim Gordon returns to take him down—only to find out he's next on the hit list.

DOOM PATROL (DC) The tension among the members of the new Doom Patrol will continue as Robotman quits the team. But all's not strife, as two team members discover a hidden love for each other.

THE FILTH (Vertigo/DC) Spartacus Hughes runs rampant on the gargantuan city-ship *Libertania*, and it's up to Ned Slade to save the day. But will Slade agree to do so after he's arrested on suspicion of child murder?

FREEMIND (Future Comics) Quadriplegic McKinsey Flint has perfected the process of transferring his consciousness into an android body, and upcoming issues will see him explore activities that were denied him because he was confined to a wheelchair.

GEN[13] (WildStorm/DC) Surprises are abundant in 2003 for Gen[13]. In January, the truth about the creature that stalked Hamza stuns team members. What's more shocking is the similar fate that each member has in store!

GHOST IN THE SHELL 2: MAN MACHINE INTERFACE (Dark Horse) When a meeting of VIPs at Poseidon Industrial turns deadly, cyber-agent Motoko Aramaki must once again make her way through cyberspace to try and solve the crime.

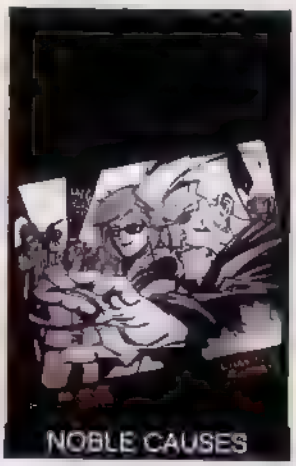
GOTHAM CENTRAL (DC) Ed Brubaker and Michael Lark chronicle Firebug's returns to Gotham, while in April's issue #6, Greg Rucka kicks off a story about Detective Renee Montoya and her relationship with one of Batman's enemies.

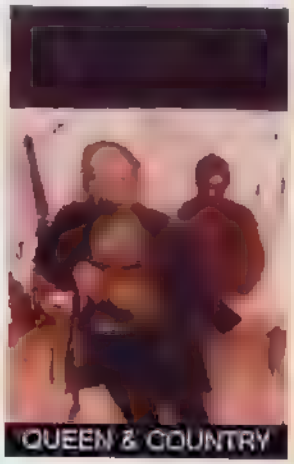
GOTHAM KNIGHTS (DC) The Spoiler's in the spotlight as Batman continues her training after taking a hiatus during last year's "Bruce Wayne: Fugitive" storyarc. Will Steph be ready to hit the rooftops with the rest of the Bat-clan?

HELLBLAZER (Vertigo/DC) In January, Mike Carey and Lee Bermejo present a two-issue storyarc on the return of waitress/novice magician Angie Spatchcock, who comes to John Constantine for help to

TRUE or FALSE

ALSO IN 2003





rescue her brother from a haunted asylum.

LONE WOLF AND CUB 2100 (Dark Horse) *Lone Wolf and Cub 2100: The Red File* is a one-shot that answers the big questions of the series so far. Then in issue #7, Daisy falls into the clutches of an evil child labor camp.

MARVILLE (Marvel) *Marville* #5 by writer (and Marvel President) Bill Jemas and penciler M.D. Bright lampoon Marvel's Wolverine mini-series, *Origin*, before February's issue #6 wraps up Jemas' stint on the book and an unnamed writer takes over.

MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE (MV Creations/Image) He-Man and friends gets his own ongoing this March. Also, look for a slew of mini-series, including a prequel-style tale featuring King Randor and a tale spotlighting villains such as Mer-Man and Beastman.

METALLIX (Future Comics) Early in 2003, one of the Metallix crew is killed in action, and later issues find the team learning more about Metal X, the programmable smart metal that forms the suit of nano-armor they share.

MICRONAUTS (Devil's Due/Image) Dan Jolley and Steve Kurth kick off the year with the upcoming "Invasion" story line, which has the pint-sized heroes journeying to the Earth in an effort to thwart an invasion by the forces of Baron Karza.

MYSTIC (CrossGen) New artist Aaron Lopresti jumps on. Giselle finds herself in a lost world of dinosaurs and warriors, and later she returns to Ciress where she'll take on the Dark Magi, who want to destroy Giselle's homeland.

NEGATION (CrossGen) As the invasion of the Negation Throneworld winds down, the focus turns to Kaine and his nemesis, Kompsin, as they go mano-a-mano on a world ruled by a race of doomsday aliens.

NOBLE CAUSES (Image) The current mini-series, "Family Secrets," concludes with a shocker as the true father of Zephyr's baby is revealed. And if that wasn't enough drama for ya, a regular character kicks the bucket!

THE POWER COMPANY (DC) There's a new mystery member joining the ranks of the Power Company that has Witchfire none too happy. With all this drama, it seems like the perfect opportunity for Dr. Polaris to strike again!

POWERS (Image) February's issue #29 sees the title get a darker edge as the government passes new Powers legislation. "Deena will definitely see some changes," says writer Brian Michael Bendis. "Big things are on the way."

PUNISHER (Marvel Knights/Marvel) January's #21 is part two of the "Brotherhood" storyline in which the Punisher hunts down a drug ring run by cops. March's issue #23 focuses on a man who hunts giant squids off the coast of Brooklyn.

QUEEN & COUNTRY (Oni Press) January kicks off an all-new storyarc, written by Greg Rucka and penciled by Jason Alexander (*Empty Zone*), which finds section director Paul Wallace off to America.

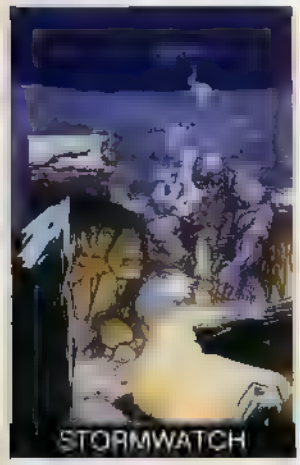
ROBOTECH (WildStorm/DC) Roy Fokker joins with Admiral Hayes' top secret VF-1 test program, much to young Rick Hunter's dismay in January's issue #2. Also, check out the *Robotech: The Macross Saga* trade paperback as well as the *Robotech Sourcebook*.

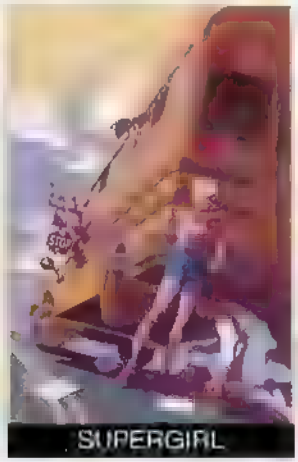
ROUTE 666 (CrossGen) While on the run, Cassie encounters the Adversary's toughest minions, carnies and demon-possessed humans. Other future issues include a southern-fried ghost story and a visit behind the Iron Curtain.

SCION (CrossGen) Ethan returns from the distant kingdom of Tigris bringing news of an imminent invasion in January through June's issues #32 through #37. Plus, a wedding in issue #35 that no one will be expecting!

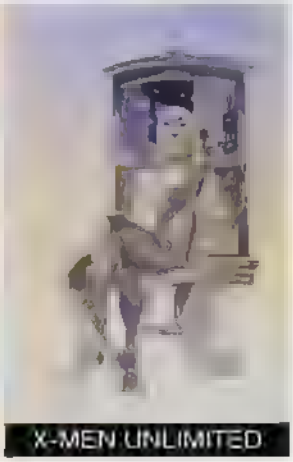
SIGIL (CrossGen) Sam defeats the evil Saurians but rips a hole in the space/time continuum in issue #32. The *BitterLuck* needs repairs in #33, and Sam begins a dark transformation that'll impact

ALSO IN 2003


STORMWATCH


SUPERGIRL

WAY OF THE RAT


X-MEN UNLIMITED

the entire CrossGen Universe in issues #35-#36.

THE SIMPSONS (Bongo Comics) See Springfield in a different light when you see it through the eyes of a five-dollar bill. In January's issue #78, see what happens when a five spot changes hands of some of Springfield's most popular residents.

SLEEPER (WildStorm/DC) New from Ed Brubaker and Sean Phillips in January. A deep-cover agent poses as a member of an elite organization of superhuman criminals, but the only person who knows his true identity is in a coma!

SMALLVILLE (DC) Launching March, this bi-monthly features comic stories and magazine-style articles on the show. In ish #1, Clark and Pete Ross, who knows Clark's secret, go on a camping trip to test the Boy of Steel's powers.

SPIDER-GIRL (Marvel) Issues #55-#56 begin the year by continuing a five-part arc by writer Tom DeFalco and penciler Pat Olliffe. It promises to cover the entire MC2 Universe and feature the Fantastic Five and future Avengers characters.

STORMWATCH: TEAM ACHILLES (WildStorm/DC) The high-octane military action continues in 2003! With the hunt for Ivana Baiul heating up, Santini charges into Washington for answers, but there's nothing polite about how he goes about getting them!

SUPERGIRL (DC) What's better than one Girl of Steel? Two Girls of Steel, natch! That's exactly what Supergirl fans can look forward to in 2003, as Kara Zor-El becomes a fixture in the series.

TITANS (DC) The three-part "Murder by Consensus" storyarc continues. Consensus invades Earth via radio and television signals, and it's up to Starfire to stop the invasion since the rest of the team has already been infected.

ULTIMATE ADVENTURES (Marvel) January's issue #4 guest stars the Ultimates as the team tries to convince Hawk-Owl and Woody to join the Ultimate War. After that, look for some startling revelations that are still hush hush.

VERTIGO POP! (Vertigo/DC) As *Vertigo Pop!: London* continues, aging rock legend Rocky Lamont, who switched bodies with an up-and-coming rock star, realizes that times have changed drastically since his days as a rabble-rousing youth.

WAY OF THE RAT (CrossGen) From Chuck Dixon and Luke Ross, January's issue #9 finds the Judge accidentally releasing a buttload of dragons in the middle of Zhumar, and only Boon holds the key to stopping them.

WEAPON X (Marvel) January's issue #5 by writer Frank Tieri and penciler Georges Jeanty reveals just how evil and diabolical the plans of the Weapon X director's plans are before a mutiny begins to form as Cable (Nathan Summers) joins the book.

WILDCATS VERSION 3.0 (WildStorm/DC) Corporate giant Halo is slowly taking over the world, and with Jack Marlow gaining more and more media attention, it's down to the Wildcats to put an end to this evil business empire.

X-MEN UNLIMITED (Marvel) January's issue #41 debuts a new mutant called MC Mystik, while the back-up story retells the Beatles' "Hard Day's Night" starring the X-Statix. Issue #42 is an all-telepath issue featuring Jean Grey, Professor X and Emma Frost.

X-TREME X-MEN (Marvel) In issues #20-#23, the team deals with the new direction of Xavier's dream of a peaceful coexistence with humans. Look for a conflict with the X-Corp team as well as the return of a former New Mutant.

YOUNG JUSTICE (DC) What happens when a member of your superteam turns to the dark side? Find out in issue #53, when Secret turns on her YJ counterparts. Also: *Young Justice* ends in 2003 to make way for the new *Teen Titans* in July (see related story page 59).

FUTURE FORECAST

Stuff we couldn't put in the preview because they're still in limbo

Despite all the cool previews you read about in the preceding pages, there are still a few projects out there we're hoping will see light in 2003. Here's a rundown, along with when (or if) you'll ever see them

KEVIN SMITH'S BRAVE AND THE BOLD

"We'll get to it sooner or later," comments Smith. But with a heavy workload that includes finishing up his film, "Jersey Girl," and a commitment to a semi-exclusive Marvel contract, don't look for this project to ship in 2003.

"Like most things I've done in the comic world, I've usually kind of called them way out in advance before I've even gotten to them, which is a mistake," admits the scribe. "I should keep my mouth shut in the future and not talk about what's coming because I never get to it right away."

KEVIN SMITH ON SPIDER-MAN

Busy as ever, Kevin Smith still wants to find time to take on the Web-head in 2003. According to the "Chasing Amy" director, while an initial plan for him to take over *Amazing Spider-Man* in January won't happen, he'll leap onto the book as soon as he finishes his new film

"Once I get clear of ['Jersey Girl,'] I'm going to head into *Amazing*," says Smith. "Early 2003? Something like that. The Black Cat is going to play a large role in our *Amazing* run, too."

J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S STRANGE TALES

Since signing on as writer of *Amazing Spider-Man*, J. Michael Straczynski's talked about relaunching *Strange Tales*, an anthology series that would allow the *Rising Stars* creator to use any character in the Marvel Universe. And while there are no set plans yet to revive the series, JMS already has a handful of stories ready

"One of the first things I had in mind was a Spider-Man/Doctor Strange combo story," says JMS. "I also have what I think could be a really cool Thor story, which could be worked into the anthology that deals with a leftover problem from the days of Dr. Donald Blake. And the third arc in the anthology—with all three stories running concurrently in each issue—would be a Captain America story, because there's something in the notion of a man out of his time that just attracts the heck out of me."

SUPERMAN: RED SON

Writer Mark Millar (*The Ultimates*) and artist Dave Johnson's (*100 Bullets* covers) story of Superman landing in communist Russia instead of Kansas has been talked about for years, but according to Millar, it's finally ready to be seen.

"*Superman: Red Son* will definitely be out this summer," promises Millar. "This is my Superman magnum opus. It's basically my effort to write the greatest Superman story of all time and, if this isn't huge, I'm going to kill myself."

ULTIMATE FANTASTIC FOUR

Rumored to be penned by Grant Morrison, the Ultimate version of Marvel's First Family is still on the top of many a fan's wish list, but according to Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada, don't look for the series anytime soon. "There are no immediate plans for *Ultimate Fantastic Four*," says Quesada. "Mark Waid's doing such an amazing job on *Fantastic Four*, we kind of want to let that title brew a while."

POSSIBLE PROJECTS When are we going to see JMS Spider-Man/Dr. Strange and an Ultimate FF book?

Mel Caylo, Mike Carlton, Brian Cunningham, Dave Marshall, Pat McCallum, James McDonough, Jim Mosciuchin, Casey Sejas, Andy Serwin and Jesse Thompson contributed to this feature. And then had pie

CASTING call

GEOFF JOHNS casts THE AVENGERS MOVIE!

Hey, if you want the straight 4-1-1, you go right to the source, right? So when we decided to do an updated "Casting Call" on Earth's Mightiest Heroes, we put in a call to brand-new *Avengers* scribe Geoff Johns, who also happens to be a hotshot Hollywood producer! If there's anyone who could assemble a big-budget motion picture starring The Avengers, it'd be this guy—and you can read it in his own words. So grab your popcorn, $20 bag of M&Ms and put out the call: "Avengers Assemble!"

GEORGE CLOONEY as IRON MAN

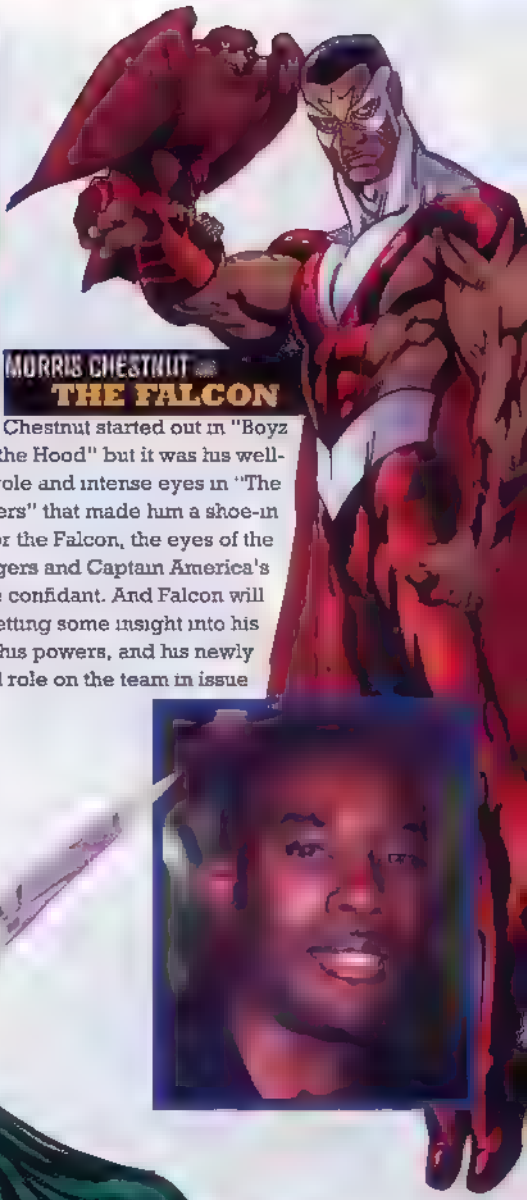
In "Three Kings" and "Out of Sight," Clooney laid on the charm, the wit and the presence that's needed to portray the billionaire playboy industrialist Tony Stark. But it'll be the comic version of Shell-head who has a major "breakdown of communication" in issue #63 that leads to an angry confrontation with Thor!

HEATH LEDGER as CAPTAIN AMERICA

At first glance you might say, "What the hell is Johns thinking?" but look at Ledger in "The Patriot." Cleaned up and playing it straight, and bringing some of the humor from "A Knight's Tale," Ledger could portray the time-lost All-American soldier perfectly. In the comics, Cap uncovers a conspiracy in issue #66 that could destroy *everything* he believes in!

BARRY PEPPER
as **THE VISION**

Pepper has shown a wide range of abilities in both "Saving Private Ryan" and "The Green Mile." And it's going to take all of that skill and intelligence to balance the sterile external appearance and the miraculous emotional soul of the Avengers' synthezoid. But that soul will be put to the test in issue #65, when the Vision's frustrations with humanity finally come to a head.

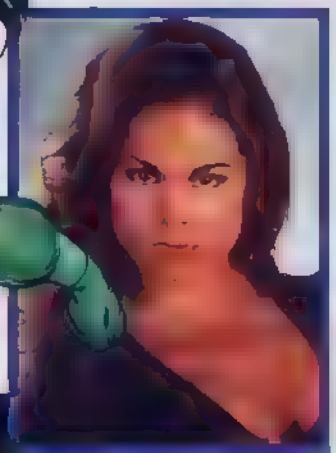


MORRIS CHESTNUT as
THE FALCON

Chestnut started out in "Boyz in the Hood" but it was his well-versed role and intense eyes in "The Brothers" that made him a shoe-in for the Falcon, the eyes of the Avengers and Captain America's ultimate confidant. And Falcon will be getting some insight into his origins, his powers, and his newly defined role on the team in issue

JOAQUIN PHOENIX as
ANT-MAN

He played a great every-day guy in "Signs" and I can see Phoenix as the "new guy on the block" with the Avengers. Plus, his interaction with the children in "Signs" shows he could portray a single father pretty easily. And that role as single dad forces Ant Man to rethink his role on the team in issue #62, when his personal life spills into his adventuring.

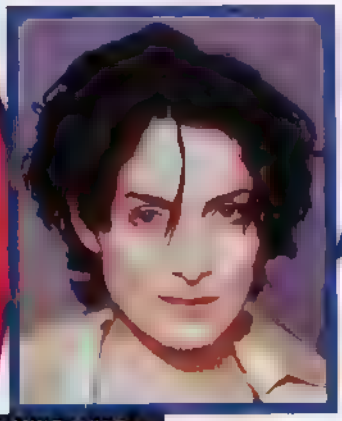


IVORY as
SHE-HULK

Straight from the WWE and "Tough Enough III," the nasty diva has the muscles and—most importantly—the smile to play everyone's favorite green giant. Her strength will be put to the test this spring, when She-Hulk suffers a major breakdown, prompting the return of a fan-favorite Avenger!

LAURENCE FISHBURNE as BLACK PANTER

In his roles in "The Matrix" and "Higher Learning," Fishburne always commanded respect and that's exactly what's needed to play the King of Wakanda, Black Panther, who always *demands* respect. But Panther won't be getting much of that this spring, as he's in for the greatest fight of his life against one of the deadliest villains in the Marvel U!

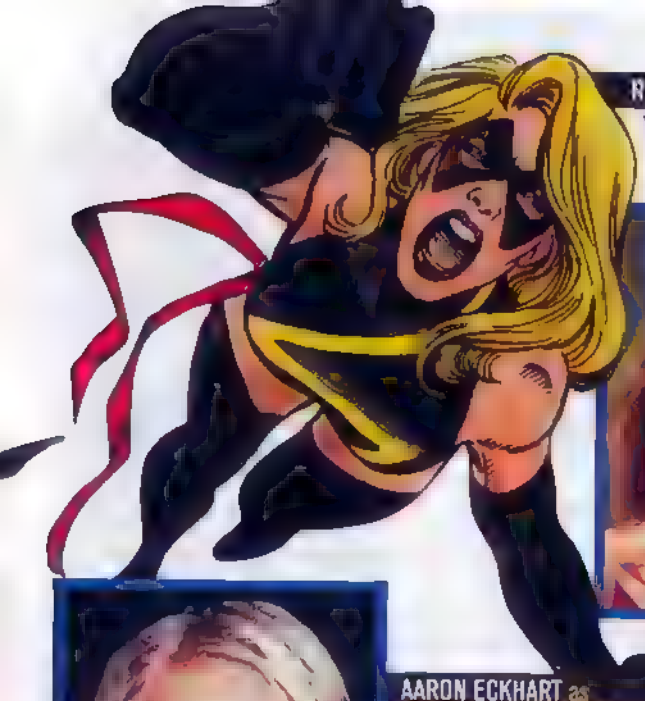


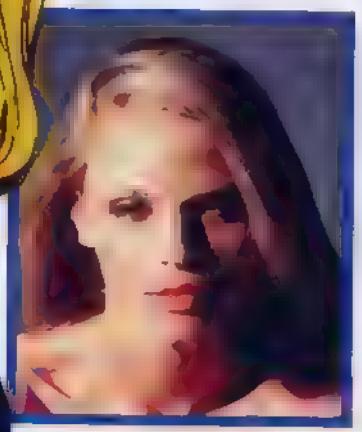
CARRIE-ANNE MOSS as THE WASP

In "The Matrix," Moss exuded confidence, leadership and sex appeal, which is what the wonderful Wasp is all about. Plus, Moss looks great in the air, a must for the high-flying Wasp! And she'll be on Cloud 9 in the coming months, as her and Yellowjacket take a little romantic vacation.

VIN DIESEL as THE MIGHTY THOR

Yeah, he doesn't have hair, but he's got the build and that voice from "Iron Giant" will make everyone listen. And when Diesel slams down the hammer, the girls will watch! Thor will be popping up from time to time, but his role on the team takes a drastic turn in issue #63



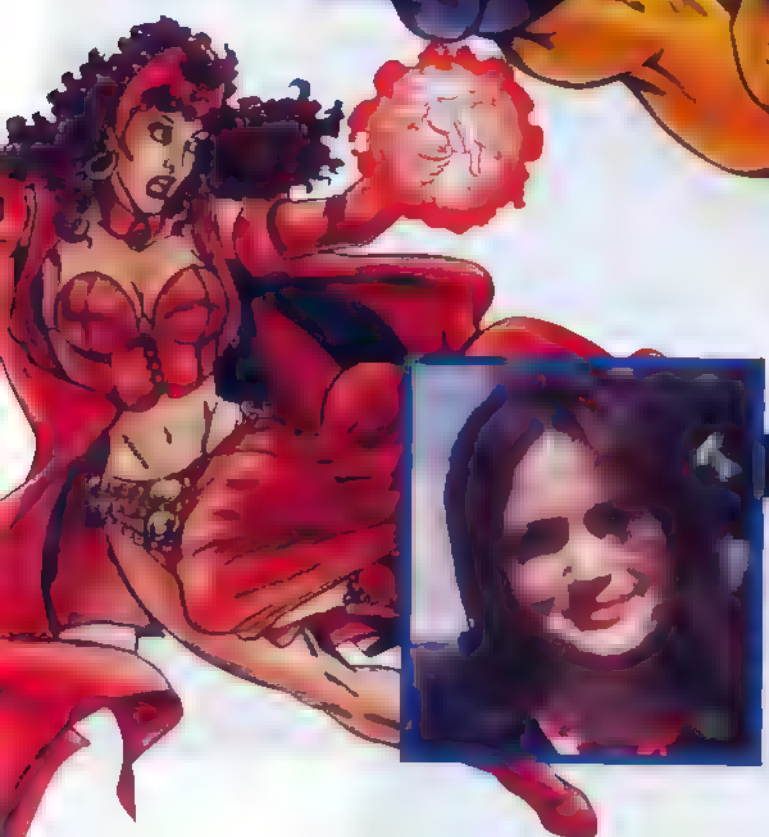


RACHEL ROBERTS as WARBIRD

Visualizing the former NASA commander and military strategist is easy when Rachel Roberts comes to mind. Roberts played the digital actress in "Simone," and that blonde hair and enhanced body would slip comfortably into Warbird's costume. Hopefully, Warbird will slip effortlessly into her new role this spring, as she's going to take on a more multifaceted, leadership position with the Avengers.

AARON ECKHART as YELLOWJACKET

You need someone who's approachable and friendly to play Dr. Hank Pym. Eckhart did that in "Nurse Betty" and teamed up with Carrie-Anne Moss (the Wasp), he'll be able to handle the role of resident scientist and founding member of the Avengers.



CARLA GUGINO as THE SCARLET WITCH

As seen in the "Spy Kids" films, Gugino has the exotic look and, most of all, the gorgeous hair that's needed to play the Queen of Chaos. But the Witch won't be able to wash her hair clean of the events of issue #60, which leads her to become "very concerned" with one of her teammates—and it's NOT the Vision!

QUIET ON THE SET!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF 'DAREDEVIL'

WIZARD stops by Josie's Bar for a nightcap, sees a blind man drive and learns from the Kingpin that crime really does pay!

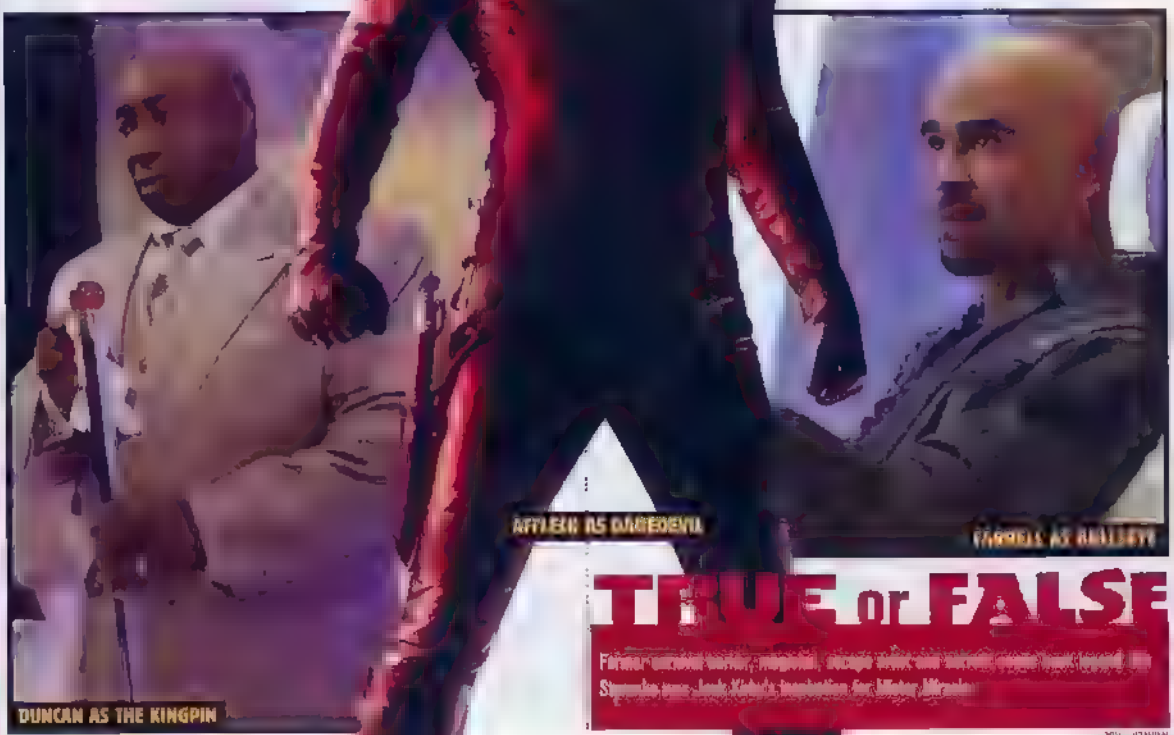
It's well past midnight on Los Angeles' infamous Skid Row. Homeless people bundle under blankets and makeshift shelters, while stinking drunk customers spill out of seedy gin mills, followed by a small army of hardened, worn out-looking hookers lined up to proposition them.

Sound like a movie set? Sorry, it's reality. The set's one block away. But the dirty, gritty ambiance carries right over into "Daredevil."

"A nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here," chuckles Mark Steven Johnson, the lifelong comic fan and writer/director of Marvel Films' and 20th Century Fox's Feb. 14, 2003 release starring Ben Affleck as Marvel Comics' famed Man Without Fear, Jennifer Garner as his love interest Elektra, Michael Clarke Duncan as the Kingpin of Crime and Colin Farrell as the psychopathic assassin called Bullseye. "But this location *is* Daredevil. His is a very dark world. He's the most 'real' of superheroes. When he gets hit, he feels it. He'll feel it a *lot*."

Tonight's scenes take place just behind "Josie's Bar," the famous underworld hangout from the *Daredevil* comic. The "bar"—a biker hangout with rusty beer signs and hubcaps tacked up on the walls—has been constructed in a former chemical warehouse. Half-full beer mugs and broken pool cues litter the scene. You *know* it's a movie set, but it's still scary. It looks like a place you'd get your ass kicked if you look cross-eyed at someone.

Outside in the alley isn't much better. Traffic rumbles overhead on the 6th Street Bridge as Daredevil's alter ego, blind lawyer Matt Murdock, interrogates a crooked cop in the officer's Mercedes-Benz SL 500 convertible. Affleck shows up in Murdock



AFFLECK AS DAREDEVIL

FARRELL AS BULLSEYE

DUNCAN AS THE KINGPIN

TRUE or FALSE

Answer this

Photos ©20th Century Fox

duds: A brown leather jacket, shades and a white cane. Johnson, looking casual in a baseball jersey and jeans, hands Affleck a small rewrite he just did moments ago. Johnson paces through the scene with Affleck, rehearsing it and reciting lines with him.

Now primed, Affleck hops in the car with the cop. He violently accelerates and power brakes through the alley, a *blind man* jerking the car back and forth in an effort to spook the cop. It works: The cop spills that the man behind Daredevil's problems is indeed the Kingpin. The final screeching stop happens a foot away from a massive concrete bridge support. You smell burning rubber and see skid marks as Johnson yells, "And cut! That was *really* f—ing cool!"

Affleck hops out of the car. "It's a miracle I haven't hit anything yet," he mutters, looking at just how close he came. The crew breaks for the night, as Johnson wanders off to his trailer to get a few hours' sleep before tomorrow's shoots.

NO REST FOR THE WEARY...OR WICKED!

The new day finds a new setting, this one *in* a studio: The Kingpin's office has been set up as a super-sleek, chrome-and-steel Midtown Manhattan masterpiece at Los Angeles' Raleigh Studios. The only thing more impressive than the polished-steel finish is the man in the middle of it all: the physically imposing Duncan, who plays the Kingpin.

Johnson's script, which he carries wrapped in a color photocopy of Joe Quesada's *Daredevil* #4 cover, describes the Kingpin as being 6-foot-7 and almost 400 pounds. Duncan is close—he goes 6-foot-5 and about 340 these days. As he ambles by in a cool blue-gray suit that matches the blue neon finish of the office, all eyes are on Duncan. "Clothes make the man!" he bellows in a voice so deep it registers on the Richter scale. "Coming from three hours in makeup on 'Planet of the Apes,' it's *so* refreshing to put on this nice suit."

Duncan sits opposite actor Erick Avari, who plays Nikolas Natchois, the father of the assassin Elektra. A prop man hands Duncan the Kingpin's crystal cane with diamond head, holding it with a cloth so as to not smudge it. Duncan grabs a cigar to light up. "When I put on my Kingpin suit, I *am* Kingpin," he smiles. "I really am rich and famous and illegal. It's fun."

The backdrop outside the Kingpin's office is a fake Manhattan skyline, but as Johnson calls the cue, *real* birds are released that fly by outside the windows. The scene, in which Kingpin and Natchois negotiate a business deal, is played out 12 times. Duncan *never* misses a line. As Johnson calls out for different angles—three of which are nothing more than close-ups of the Kingpin puffing on his cigar—he's quick and authoritative, but always says "please" and calls Duncan "sir." Then again, wouldn't you?

As the crew breaks for lunch, Duncan jokes with a makeup girl. His loud, bassy laughs shake the entire set. Johnson is shaken in a different way. He threw out his back on last night's shoot, and a production assistant has just arrived with some ointment purchased in Chinatown, which Johnson will rub on in hope of relief.

"Long night, long day," he exhales. "But it's worth it. I wanted to do the 'Daredevil' movie my whole life. It's finally payoff [illegible] ■ JEN McLAUGHLIN

GARNER AS ELEKTRA

FULL 'NELSON'

Comic fan Favreau dishes dirt on 'Daredevil'

Jon Favreau ("Swingers") plays Matt Murdock's buddy and law partner, Foggy Nelson, in "Daredevil." Here's his inside slant:

WIZARD: Foggy has been portrayed in the comics in every vein from crafty to comedy relief. How do you play him in this movie?

FAVREAU: A bit more comedy relief. At this point in the story, he's not aware of Matt Murdock's secret identity. So as far as he's concerned, Matt's just preoccupied and not focused enough on their legal practice. I'm a bit oblivious to it all.

Are you a comic reader now? Or were you as a kid?

In high school in the early '80s, I read a lot--*Heavy Metal*, the Robert Crumb comics, and *Groo* was always a favorite. I was also reading *X-Men* and the *Daredevil* "Elektra Saga." [*Laughs*] I remember working with Famke Janssen on "Love and Sex" when she got the "X-Men" script for the Jean Grey part. She wasn't too familiar with the X-Men, but I had grown up reading them. I was like, "You don't understand! There's a *huge* buzz around this film! I really encourage you to take this part!" I just visited her on the "X-Men 2" set, which looks really fun.

Having had a taste, would you be in another superhero movie?

Yeah! The fun of being an actor is acting out all these childhood fantasies. Everybody wants to play a cowboy, a soldier, an astronaut and certainly superhero roles fall into that category.

So who's gonna be the showstopper in "Daredevil"?

I think the part that will have the most impact is *not* an actor. It's just how kinetic the movie is. You have this *incredible* energy with wild fight scenes and huge set pieces. There's such a sense of danger and death and huge consequence all throughout the movie. I think it's the rhythm and energy of the whole film that will get people going. ■ JM

CRASHING THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB

An exclusive photo gallery from the set of 'League of Extraordinary Gentlemen'

The beleaguered set of 20th Century Fox's "League of Extraordinary Gentlemen," starring Sean Connery, will hit screens on July 11, 2003 come hell or high water.

Filmed in Prague, "League"—which teams characters from a variety of classic novels—not only contended with intense flooding (costing millions in damages to the set), but also with flaring tempers during the difficult shoot. But you'd never know it, judging from the exclusive photos from the film shown below.

1) COP AN ATTITUDE Detective Tom Sawyer (Shane West) comes loaded for bear when he crosses the pond to lend a hand to the League.

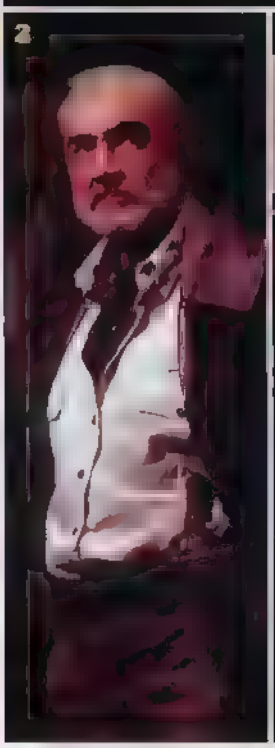
2) BROKEN BOND Connery still manages to cut an imposing figure as the aging-yet-adventurous tomb raider Allan Quatermain from H. Rider Haggard's pulp novel series.

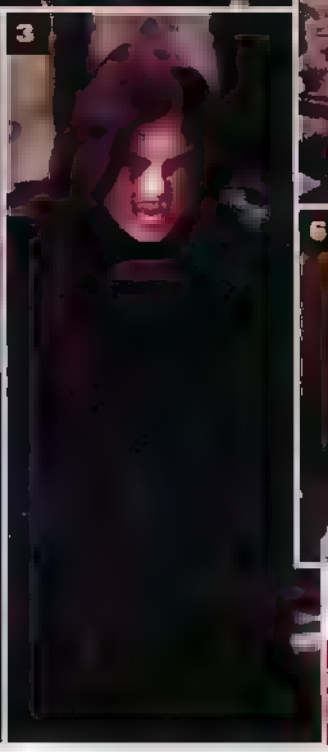
3) VAMPING IT UP *Dracula*'s Mina Harker, played by Peta Wilson, bears her fangs. Expect her role to be smaller than that of the *League* comics, where she is team leader.

4) GOOD HOUSEKEEPING The ageless Dorian Gray (Stuart Townsend) might contend with mortality at the hands of mysterious foe, The Phantom.

5) LEAGUE MVPS From left: Quatermain, the Invisible Man (Tony Curran), Gray and Capt. Nemo (Naseeruddin Shah) confront the Phantom.

6) GRAY MATTERS Townsend goes over a scene with "League" director Stephen Norrington ("Blade"), who reportedly almost came to blows with Connery on set.





TRUE or FALSE

The name "Spiderman," without the trademarked hyphen [illegible] Comics but cannot be used without Marvel's consent.

ANSWER: TRUE

All photos: 20th Century Fox

WB PROVIDES SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

Third season of 'Static Shock' serves up galaxy of DC stars

Get ready for a jolt, because The Kids WB! plans to crank up the voltage with its third season of "Static Shock."

Based on the Milestone/DC Comics property "Static Shock" follows Virgil Hawkins, a quick-witted, African-American teen who developed electromagnetic superpowers after being exposed to a mutagenetic gas.

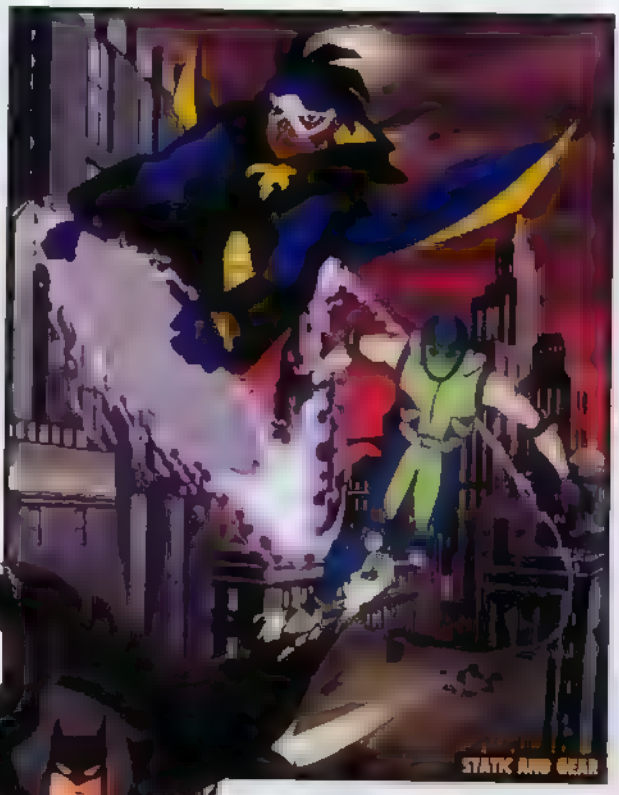
Over the past two seasons, Static has faced a number of amped-up villains, but this season he'll be embarking on some new territory as he teams with some of DC Comics' top heroes—and faces some of the publisher's worst villains.

Bowing on Jan. 25, 2003, the season premiere will see Static traveling to Gotham City to enlist the help of Batman, after one of his friends seeks help from Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy. According to Supervising Producer Alan Burnett, this won't be the last DC Comics hero fans can expect on the show.

"The most fun character for all of us is still Static himself," noted Burnett, "But it's fun to see him interact with all these other characters, like Batman or Green Lantern."

According to Producer Denys Cowan—who co-created the *Static* comic for Milestone/DC—The WB originally wanted "Static Shock" to be very kid friendly, and while it's still a show geared towards a younger audience, it's a show that's aged with its fans.

"For me, the most fun story-wise was that the villains have gotten older and more opposing," said Cowan. "For awhile, the network wanted nothing but kid villains and I think when we did the episode with Batman and Joker, they saw that adult villains could be just as wild and fun as kid villains. This year, there's a feeling to the show that Static is a year older, kids are growing up and the villainy has gotten a lot more threatening because it's grown up, too. Heroes are only as good as the villains they're up against and [Static's] up against some terrific, strong, older villains."


STATIC AND GEAR

But with the older villains will come a lot of help. There are already plans for a two-part episode (air date to be determined) guest starring the Justice League and even a team-up with Superman towards the end of the season.

Guest stars aren't the only things changing about "Static Shock" either; the producers have also given Static's longtime friend, Richie Foley, superpowers. Naming himself Gear, Richie's turned into a superhero with advanced understanding of technology and science with the ability to create high-tech tools.

"Well, we've heard from fans that they wanted Richie to be more than just an average kid," explained Burnett. "They wanted Static to have a superhero as a friend. And that was the reason for it. When we did it, it really revitalized the show for us. It gave a strong new core to the show. We're really happy with it."

The team also says they'd love to have more guest stars appear on the show, but they're probably not the ones you expect. Instead of DC's icons, Burnett and Cowan would like to delve deeper into the Milestone Universe, where Static originated, to mine for guest stars.

"If we ever got a fourth and fifth season, we've talked about bringing in some of the Milestone characters," said Burnett.

"[We'd love to use] characters like Hardware or Rocket," added Cowan. "I keep mentioning every month—'Why don't we bring in Hardware or Rocket? Let's put them in Static!' We'll see what happens." ■ MIKE COTTON

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

video game STUFF

2003 PREVIEW!!!

Does 'Halo 2' and other super-sequels still have what it takes?

Now that the holidays are past, it's game time! And whether you scored a GAMECUBE, PS2 or Xbox, a next-gen console is only as good as the games you can play on it. So, before you plop yer butt in front of the TV, take a minute to check out the titles we can't wait to play.

AQUAMAN: BATTLE FOR ATLANTIS (TDK Mediactive) GAMECUBE, Xbox Making his video game splash, DC's King of Atlantis stars in his very own action adventure title. Gamers must master Aquaman's superhuman strength, his telepathy with the creatures of the sea, and don't forget that big friggin' hook! **February 2003**

BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW (Kemco) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox For years you've played Bat-games, solving crimes with simple fisticuffs and under aged sidekicks! Well, prepare to put the "detect" back into "The World's Greatest Detective" because with this game, players will have to actually find clues, sneak around villains using the shadows as cover and throw down with the likes of Black Mask and the Joker over the fate of Commissioner Gordon! **1st Quarter 2003**

BATMAN: VENGEANCE 2 (Ubi Soft) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox Cowl up, kiddies, because it's time to sucker-punch those ruff 'n' tumble Gotham City Goons in Ubi Soft's sequel to *Vengeance*, last year's Bat-smash! Not many details are available, but look for the return of all your fave Bat-actors to flesh out the Joker and the rest of the Rogues Gallery. **Fall 2003**

DAREDEVIL (Encore) Game Boy Advance, GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox You better leave the seeing-eye dog at home, since you'll be flying across the alleys of Hell's Kitchen as the "Man Without Fear!" With an enhanced sense of hearing, touch and smell, players will take on the Kingpin, Bullseye and possibly even Stilt Man. **GBA: Early 2003; Next-gen: Fall 2003**

DEVIL MAY CRY 2 (Capcom) PS2 Dante's back and ready to kick some demonic booty. With a plethora of new moves and weapons at his disposal, the half-man, half-devil paranormal investigator returns to battle the forces of darkness, and of course look cool while doing it. **Summer 2003**

ENTER THE MATRIX (Shiny Entertainment) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox Whether you take the blue or red pill, we guarantee you'll see the following in the Matrix game: bullet time, bullet time and finally, more bullet time! Almost half of the games on the market have been ripping off the Matrix's signature camera trick for three years now, and it would be a shame if poppa Neo didn't finally get a crack at it himself! **May 15, 2003**

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE (3DO) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox With the artistic vision of Simon Bisley (Lobo) and Dave DeVries, and the vocal talents of Tim Curry ("The Rocky Horror Picture Show") as Satan, what more do you need? Our hero, Abaddon, a fallen archangel, takes it upon himself to stop the Horsemen, who are attempting to end existence. The Bible has never been so cool! **Fall 2003**

.hack (Bandai) PS2 OK, you love online gaming. But what if it was real, the worlds you explored

and the monsters you slayed? That's the basic premise of .hack (pronounced "dot hack"), so be careful not to get sucked in. **Q1 2003**

HALO 2 (Bungie Studios) Xbox Praise whatever deity you worship friends, for you are not worthy of such a fine sequel! You must be patient though, since *Halo 2* won't be gracing us with its presence until next winter. Expect more of the same multiplayer goodness, but hopped up on the goofballs—and online capabilities! This game is going to be silly-good! **November 2003**

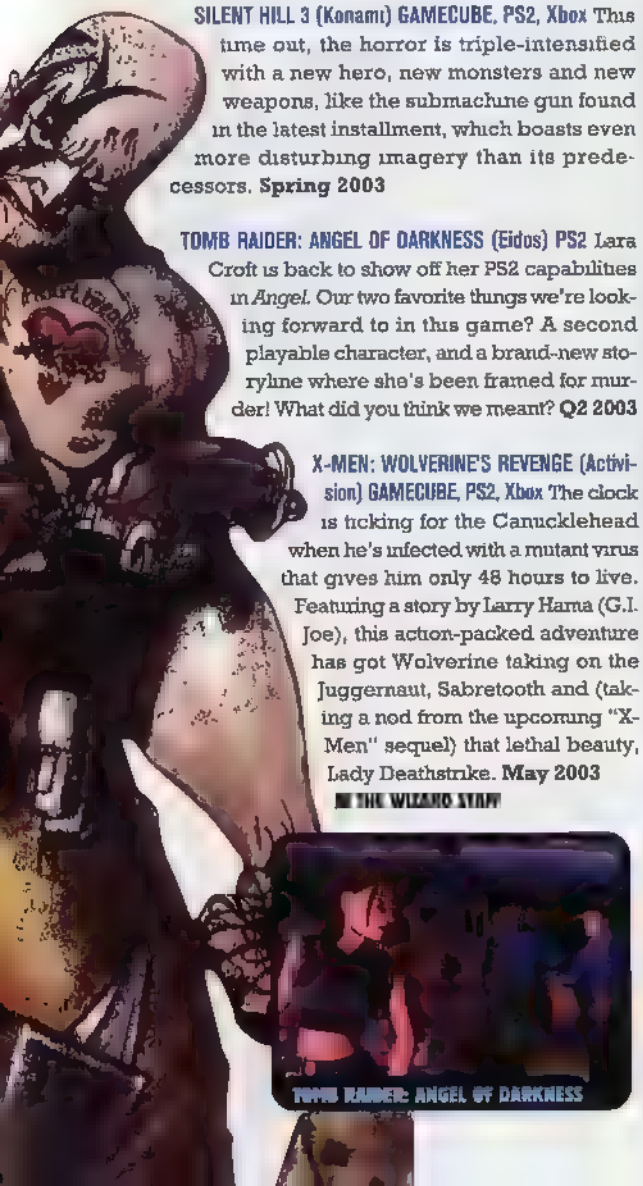
HULK: THE MOVIE (Vivendi/Universal) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox Not only is the Hulk poised to smash the box office, but Vivendi/Universal's banking that their upcoming Hulk game is going to rock the video game world as well. Tied directly into the movie, the title promises full 3-D Hulk action as Bruce Banner walks the fine line between superhero and monster. **June 2003**

SILENT HILL 3 (Konami) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox This time out, the horror is triple-intensified with a new hero, new monsters and new weapons, like the submachine gun found in the latest installment, which boasts even more disturbing imagery than its predecessors. **Spring 2003**

TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS (Eidos) PS2 Lara Croft is back to show off her PS2 capabilities in *Angel*. Our two favorite things we're looking forward to in this game? A second playable character, and a brand-new storyline where she's been framed for murder! What did you think we meant? **Q2 2003**

X-MEN: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE (Activision) GAMECUBE, PS2, Xbox The clock is ticking for the Canucklehead when he's infected with a mutant virus that gives him only 48 hours to live. Featuring a story by Larry Hama (G.I. Joe), this action-packed adventure has got Wolverine taking on the Juggernaut, Sabretooth and (taking a nod from the upcoming "X-Men" sequel) that lethal beauty, Lady Deathstrike. **May 2003**

■ THE WIZARD STAFF



videorumblings

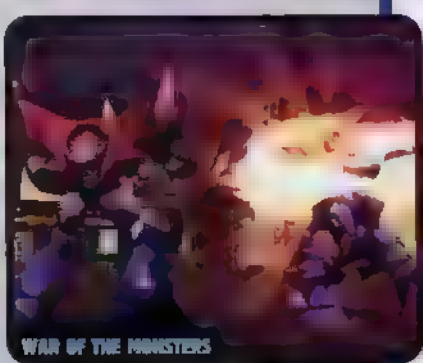
BITS AND BYTES!

BACK TO THE FUTURE Consider yourself lucky if grew up with the NES and Master System, since, this past Christmas, not only did we get the old-school Sonic Mega Collection for the GAMECUBE (check it out for a 16-bit flashback), but we also got the GBA eReader that contains the original NES games. Heck, you can even play NES Zelda in *Animal Crossing*, and Metroid 1 when *Metroid Prime* and *Fusion* are connected. Even better, rumors are popping up about possible future Nintendo collections for the 'CUBE, and that Japanese gamers are getting N64 game *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* along with a never-before-released Zelda game on one disk for FREE, if they pre-order *Zelda* on the 'CUBE! Whoa—flashback!

DIESEL POWERED Movie mega-star and avid gamer Vin Diesel ("XXX") is investing in his hobby. More details are sparse at this time, but there are reports that Diesel has started a video game production company called Tigon. Their first game, *Perrone*, will be a '70s-style gritty cop adventure.

MONSTER MANIA Didn't get spooked enough this past Halloween? Later this month, look for Sony's *War of the Monsters*, a brawler that let's up to four players duke it out with a plethora of mutated monstrosities and giant robots inspired by the creature features of the '50s and '60s. Gamers who prefer their terror in a more manageable size should check out February's *Primal*, which features a sexy young heroine with the ability to transform into four demonic forms.

SO DREAMY Reportedly, Dreamwave Productions (*Transformers: Generation One*) is in negotiations with video game publisher Capcom to produce comics based on the hit *Devil May Cry* games. Sources suggest that fans may soon see four-color versions of other Capcom properties as well, such as *Dark Stalkers*, *Rival Schools* and *Maximo*.



ATTA BOY! Oh, those clever designers at Nintendo. The company announced the coming of the Game Boy Player, a peripheral unit that attaches to the GAMECUBE and allows gamers to play Game Boy, Game Boy Color and Game Boy Advance games on the television screen. The new hardware opens up a library of over 1,400 titles to be enjoyed on a larger venue. The Game Boy Player hits Japan in March and the U.S. in May. ■ THE WIZARD STAFF

manga MANIA!

COOL JAPANESE COMIC AND ANIME NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW...

POP-O-MATIC

Lupin III, G-Gundam headline TokyoPop's new manga acquisitions

With the announcement of seven new acquisitions, TokyoPop has fast become one of the premier distributors of manga in the United States. But have you ever wondered how certain titles make it this far? We did.

Out of the thousands of manga and anime out there, it's a wonder how companies choose which titles to acquire and attempt to license. "When looking for new manga properties, we always keep a few key questions in mind," begins Chad Benesh, the company's director of marketing. "Was it popular in its country of origin? Will our fans enjoy the property? Does it have a lot of good buzz in the U.S.? If all answers point to 'yes,' we'll do everything we can to bring it under our umbrella."

But choosing a title is just the beginning of what can be a long and arduous ordeal.

"The acquisition process varies greatly from title to title, as all licensors are different," says Benesh. "At times, the process can involve a painstaking relationship that takes months or even years to nurture."

From there, the property is repackaged to appeal to American audiences. "Once we acquire a new property, our creative team goes to work on its production and marketing," explains Benesh. "The editors work on the translation, artists craft each cover and the sales and marketing staff go to work on getting the word out there."

TokyoPop's roster already includes such popular titles like *Sailor Moon*, *Cowboy Bebop* and *Love Hina*. Here's what to expect from the company in the months ahead.

GATEKEEPERS Invaders have infiltrated the Earth, and the only hope of stopping them lies in the hands of the Gatekeepers, a group of psychokinetic teens who use their psychic powers as a last defense against a relentless force.

G-GUNDAM Clashes between nations in a future century are settled not by war, but by organized tournaments between giant Mobile Fighters called Gundams.

JING: KING OF BANDITS In a purely fantastical world where commonplace sights include a haunted ship with a living anchor, a speeding train run by a Dodo bird and a floating island ruled by a mask, Jing is a master thief so skilled he could steal the stars themselves.

LUPIN III An international master thief and his band of cohorts who come from a long line of high-stakes bandits are committed to stealing from the rich for personal wealth.

RAVE An all-powerful Dark Being falls into the control of the evil society Demon Card. The world's only hope is Haru, a young boy with a big sword who must collect the pieces of the RAVE stone to stop the darkness.

SAMURAI DEEPER KYO Kyoshiro is a peaceful medicine peddler who harbors the soul of an assassin. Searching for his own identity, he accompanies a young bounty hunter across Japan in pursuit of a murderer.

SCRYED Two groups of mutated humans on an outcast district of Japan struggle to gain the advantage, and only one man stands between them, as he may hold the key to a peaceful coexistence. But is he willing to get involved? ■ JENNIFER CONTINO

POP LIFE TokyoPop has optioned popular titles like (from top) *G-Gundam*, *Lupin III* and *Rave* for U.S. audiences.

TRUE or FALSE

Answer: [illegible] chosen to replace the original actress as Martha Kent on "Smallville" because [illegible] starred as Lois Lane in "Superman III."

ANSWER: FALSE

HOT IMPORTS

MANGA

AMERIMANGA VOL. 1 #2 (I.C. Entertainment) Four original stories wrestle with the relationship between light and darkness, exposing the implications of a world without shadow. $7.99

THE FIST OF THE NORTH STAR: THE MASTER EDITION VOL. 1 (Gutsoon! Entertainment) Following Kenshiro as he fights for justice in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, this new large format, full-color collection was directly overseen by creator Hara Tetsuo. $14.95

GUNDAM: THE ORIGIN VOL. 4 GN (Viz) Amuro takes the Gundam into a deadly battle against Char and the Red Comment, both struggling to discover more about the new Mobile Suit. $7.95

LONE WOLF 2100: SHADOWS ON SAPLINGS TP (Dark Horse) In a dystopian future, an android protects a young girl from a world-spanning corporation bent on her destruction. $12.95

ONEGAI TEACHER. PLEASE TEACHER GN #1 (ComicsOne) Just when he thought senior year couldn't get any weirder, high school student Kei catches a glimpse of his new teacher floating through the air. $9.95

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: DEEDLIT'S TALE VOL. 2 (CPM Manga) With the Marmo army approaching, Deedlit and Pam escape into the cursed Forest of No Return, only to confront new dangers. $15.95

ANIME

ARGENTO SOMA (Bandai) When Takuto's colleagues are murdered during the resurrection and examination of a hostile alien, the mysterious Mr. X offers him vengeance against the monster that destroyed his life. DVD–$29.98

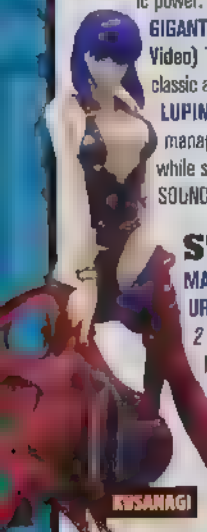
DEVIL LADY VOL. 1 (ADV Films) As a fashion model, Jun has everything going for her until a confrontation with a mysterious stalker transforms her into a beast of horrific power. DVD–$29.98

GIGANTOR VOL. 2 (Rhino Home Video) The adventure continues in episodes 27-52 of this cartoon classic about a boy and his robot companion. DVD BOX SET–$59.95

LUPIN III VOL. 1 (Pioneer) As the world's greatest thief, Lupin manages to constantly evade the irascible Inspector Zenigata while still making plenty of time for the ladies. DVD–$24.98 CD SOUNDTRACK–$14.98

STUFF

MASAMUNE SHIROW'S MAN-MACHINE INTERFACE FIGURES (Toycom) Straight from the pages of *Ghost in the Shell 2* comes three different versions of the ravishing Motoko Kusanagi. (January) $14.99



TRIGUN BLACK VASH 12-INCH FIGURE (Previews exclusive) Bigger is better with this 1/6th scale treatment of Vash, featuring 13 points of articulation, an extra gun, black cat and removable sunglasses. (January) $34.99

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? STORY IDEAS? DROP US A LINE AT
MANGAMANIA@WIZARDWORLD.COM

EAST MEETS NORTH

Dreamwave lands ADV license

Pat Lee's Dreamwave Productions has entered into a new agreement with ADV Films that will allow the Canadian comic book publisher to tackle some of their favorite anime.

Dreamwave has agreed to produce a series of collectible lithographs and posters based on ADV Films titles, the first of which will be "Bubblegum Crisis Tokyo 2040," about a small band of female mercenaries who don specialized combat suits to battle an army of synthetic monsters. Artists tackling the Bubblegum lithos will include Dan Norton (*Ninja Boy*), Frank Cho (*Liberty Meadows*) and Lee. If the venture proves to be a success, fans can count on a rapid succession of lithos from other ADV mainstays, including "Neon Genesis Evangelion."

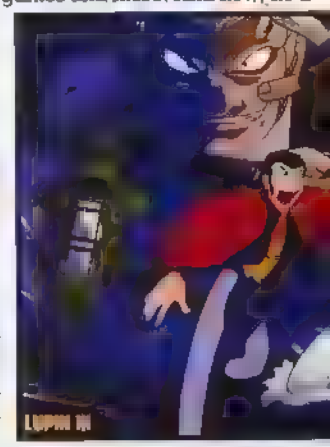
"Of course," assures Dreamwave CEO Adam Fortier. "If this is a hit, we'd love to do more. ADV has an extensive library our guys would love the opportunity to play with." ■ JAMES McDONOUGH

CRIME SPREE

Lupin III steals his way onto TV

Lupin III is anime's pre-eminent thief who has stolen for nearly 30 years, but he may be ready to pull off his biggest heist yet: American TV.

Thanks to his accomplices at the Cartoon Network, one of the most popular, longest-running series in Japan will get a mass American debut. "Lupin III" is about a thief, a swindler and a sucker for a pretty face. Lupin is the star of shows, movies, TV specials, video games and more. And now, he'll be the newest addition to Cartoon Network's Adult Swim block, which extends to five nights a week in January.



The show will feature the second season of Lupin's original Japanese TV adventures, which first aired in 1973. "Lupin III" is tentatively set to debut with the new Adult Swim in early 2003. All you need to do is watch—and keep an eye on your wallet. ■ ROBERT BRICKEN

TRUE or FALSE

Dreamwave was originally planned to be in Los Angeles, but was changed when it was realized that would be too expensive.

ANSWER: FALSE

KIA ASAMIYA VS. THE KIA SEPHIA

One's done work all over the comic spectrum, the other's been replaced by the less comical Kia Spectra. But which Asian treasure is the best American import? ■ ZACH OAT

Born in Japan, where for six years 200,000 samurai made war on Korea	Born in South Korea and came with a 10-year/100,000-mile warranty
WINNER: SEPHIA	
One of his most commercial creations is "Dark Angel," which is now at Image	Once ran commercials during the TV show "Dark Angel," which is now finished
WINNER: ASAMIYA	
Broke into the U.S. with *Star Wars*, featuring a Toydarian junk dealer	Broke into the U.S. by starting a price war with punk Toyota dealers
WINNER: ASAMIYA	
His series, "Silent Mobius," has a high fan rating	Its chassis had a high frontal crash rating
WINNER: SEPHIA	
In 1989, he created a book called *Steam Detectives*	Recalled in 1995 because the seatbelts were defective
WINNER: ASAMIYA	

It was a tight race, but Kia Asamiya says "See ya" to the Sephia, 3-2!

GHOST BUSTERS

Pros react to 'Ghost in the Shell 2'

With *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface* #1 from Dark Horse and Studio Proteus finally hitting, we asked some of comicdom's biggest manga fans their impressions of Masamune Shirow's latest opus.

KAARE ANDREWS (*Spider-Man: Legend of the Spider-Clan*) "This book is simply overwhelming. The art is layers upon layers of pencil drawings, computer colors, 3-D models, vector graphics, scanned-in textures—you can't just take it all in at once. You're thrown into an abyss of technical jargon, dialogue, characters, plots, technological descriptions, scientific theory and the author's own running commentary. This book is important."

BENN DUNN (*Ninja High School*) "Is it any wonder [Shirow] is the master of Japanese cyberpunk? He's one of the few creators in comics that capture the feel of the future. [This] will long be considered a science fiction masterpiece and should convert anyone who thinks manga is all about big eyes and speed lines."

PAT LEE (*Transformers*) "Masamune Shirow does it again with his mind-blowing artwork. It's difficult to critique a master. As much as many may believe the CG does not fit well with the characters, after reviewing the package, you just can't complain. It's beautiful artwork regardless of the abstract CG work in the background—you just don't notice it that much when you're staring at his beautifully rendered women!"

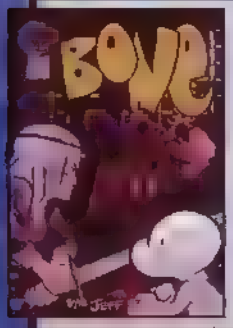
FRANCIS MANAPUL (*Witchblade*) "I thought the art was amazing. I read the first series, and I thought the transition from traditional watercolor to computer coloring was done well. Although I'm more fond of the watercolor, they did a good job with the digital coloring and an amazing job blending the 3-D background with the figures." ■ JMcD

SECRET STASH

comics' hidden gems

BONE: THE END

FANS AWAIT THE SMALL PRESS EVENT OF 2003—THE CONCLUSION TO JEFF SMITH'S EPIC SERIES



THE DIRT After a decade of being considered the quintessential small press title, Jeff Smith gives fans the long-awaited conclusion to *Bone* this summer

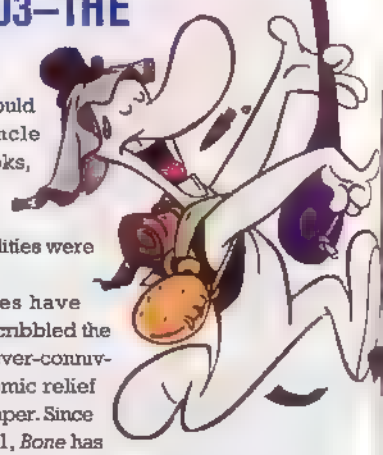
DOYA LIKE? Like "Lord of the Rings," "The Iliad" and other epics which Smith claims as inspirations, the finale of *Bone* should prove to be the dramatic ending fans of the series have come to anticipate over the past 10 years.

DIDJA KNOW? What does Jeff Smith have planned after the final page of *Bone* is sent to the printers? More work. Smith has several projects in the works (both creator-owned and for a mainstream publisher) which will certainly keep him busy in 2003.

Forty years.

For some people, it's a prison sentence. For others, it's a Ruby Anniversary. But for Jeff Smith, the past four decades have meant only one thing—*Bone*.

"My mom used to bring home stacks of paper from her job," remarks the 42-year-old Smith. "So I would sit with a box of crayons and draw for hours. I was always encouraged to make up stories and play with art, so I actually came up with the three Bone cousins when I was about four or five years old. I would draw them in little Uncle Scrooge-like comic books, and granted their adventures weren't too sophisticated, but their personalities were intact."



Nearly four decades have passed since Smith first scribbled the lovable Fone Bone, the ever-conniving Phoney Bone and comic relief Smiley Bone onto Xerox paper. Since the series debuted in 1991, *Bone* has won countless awards (including an astounding nine Eisners), been collected into several foreign editions and become the small press series by which all others are judged. This summer, Smith and the Bone boys stand at the threshold of the biggest event for the indy press in 2003—issue #55, the series finale.

"Jeff Smith's work is a fresh breath in the business," says artist and longtime *Bone* fan Alex Ross. "He's been able to be successful at something that goes against the entire grain of every other work that has been the predominant style or genre of the medium. It's a Herculean task and accomplishment."

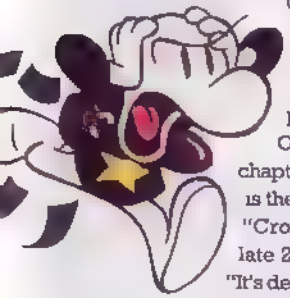
The *Bone* saga began simple enough: The three Bone cousins are chased out of their hometown of Boneville after Phoney takes one of his trademark scams too far. One by one they find their way into the village of Barrelhaven where they meet the lovely Thorn, her rough-and-tumble Gran'ma Ben and grizzled barkeep Lucius. It's here that they also encounter all sorts of monsters and dragons, some who are helpful, and others who'd like to

TRUE or FALSE

GET YER KICKS Even though *Bone* is a fantasy series with comedic elements, creator Smith doesn't skimp on action sequences.

turn the Bones into quiche.

Fans of the series have seen the Bones undertake some of the most outrageous adventures to ever hit comic shelves. "The Great Cow Race," which ran through issues #7-#11, found Phoney and Smiley rigging Barrelhaven's annual cow race to swindle the townspeople out of their money.



Other stories have been epic chapters in Smith's Tolkien-esque tale, as is the case for the final six-part storyarc, "Crown of Horns," which kicked off in late 2002

"It's definitely a big magnum opus ending," says Smith. "The last issues will be dedicated to a huge battle that'll in some ways be conventional to a fantasy ending. Phoney and Smiley will actually have to do some fighting, but the most interesting part of the story is Fone and Thorn will have to take on the Lord of Locusts [*Bone*'s primary villain] themselves."

Despite the bittersweet event, fans will still have at least one Bone spin-off to look forward to. Based on 2002's *Rose* mini-series, Smith and veteran artist Charles Vess (*Sandman*) will once again team up for a sequel, scheduled to ship in late 2003. In addition, Smith has several other projects in the works, including a Shazam! bookshelf project for DC Comics, scheduled for release in 2004.

While Smith admits he'll miss working on the title, he anticipates the day that he can finally say he's finished.

"I'm looking forward to putting all nine trades up on the shelf and just looking at them," says Smith. "On the other hand, these characters have been such a big part of my life that it'll

WANNA PICK THIS SERIES UP?

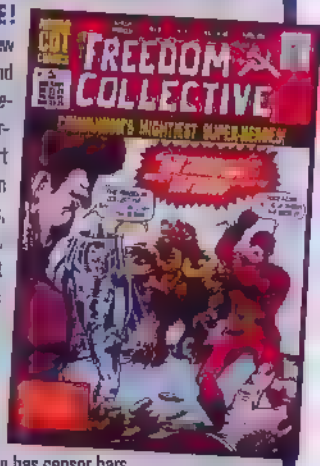
Call 1-888-COMIC-BOOK to locate your local comic shop, or visit www.bonecomics.com and order directly. Know about a cool book that you feel deserves some press? Write to us at Sound Stage, c/o Wizard Entertainment, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY, 10920, or e-mail soundstage@wizardentertainment.com.

HIDE 'N' SEEK

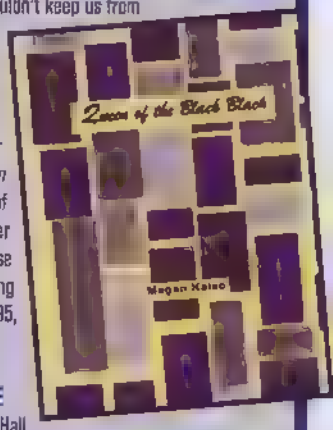
TRACK THESE BABIES DOWN

Does *Bone* sound like a good read? Then why not check these books out as well? All items ship in January unless otherwise noted.

COMRADES ASSEMBLE! What if Stan Lee and Jack Kirby grew up in the former Soviet Union? Find out in Rough Cut Comics' *The Freedom Collective*, starring a pinko version of the Avengers! Though the art is appropriately crude (a Kremlin Kirby wouldn't have the finest tools, after all) this comic will turn you Red with laughter, comrades. Not only are all Westerners shown as evil idiot capitalists, but the first page says "Ever Watchful Igor Sloano Proudly Presents," and ads sell family fun: "Record your parents' voices at home (then send them to us)"! The letters page even has censor bars over some missives! The KGB couldn't keep us from buying this book. $3.95, **www.roughcut-comics.com**

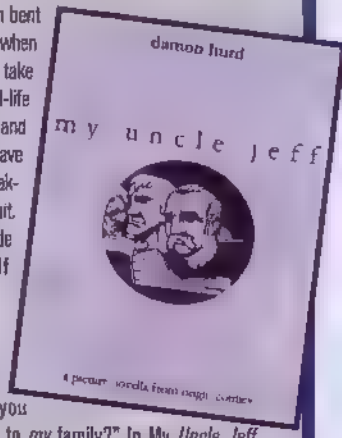


BACK IN BLACK BLACK Two-time Ignatz Award winner Megan Kelson has released *Queen of the Black Black*, a collection of her short stories from Highwater Books, which run the gamut of prose to tales of childhood to discussing genital herpes over coffee. $12.95, **www.highwaterbooks.com**



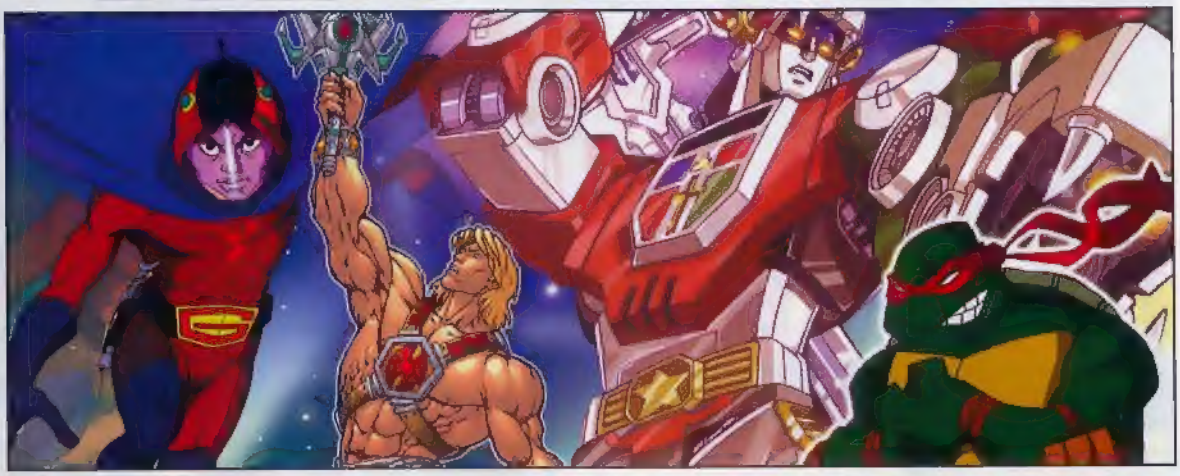
THAT YELLOW MENACE The duo of Matt Kindt and Jason Hall return with the third graphic novel in their *Pistolwhip* series, *The Yellow Menace*, from Top Shelf.

Picking up right where *Pistolwhip* and *Mephisto* left off, *Menace* follows the adventures of Jack Peril, the hero of movies, radio and comics mentioned briefly in the previous two chapters, as he takes on the Yellow Menace, a mysterious supervillain bent on killing the noble hero. However, when a series of Peril-related murders take place in the real world, will a real-life Peril come to the rescue? Kindt and Hall's intriguing storytelling will leave you guessing with every page, making this edition well worth the wait. This series our best small press title of 2001. Visit **www.topshelfcomix.com**. $14.95.



FAMILY AFFAIR Everyone's got a favorite uncle or aunt– the one that always makes you wonder, "How are you related to *my* family?" In My *Uncle Jeff* from Origin Comics, Damon Hurd tells the story of his favorite uncle, a smelly, motorcycle-riding, lovable oaf that serves as the only support in a tumultuous family. Visit **www.origincomics.com**. $2. ■ CS

'NET GAINS



'80S PROPERTIES INVADE 2003

As He-Man tops the sales chart, comic publishers usher in next wave of nostalgia titles

Who woulda thought pageboy haircuts could translate into big bucks?

MV Creations/Image's *Masters of the Universe* #1, starring He-Man, Skeletor and rest of the Eternian crew, is just the latest chart-topping comic to emerge from what has become a continuing fascination with all things '80s, following hot on the heels of such mega-selling titles as *Transformers*, *G.I. Joe* and *Thundercats*.

But there's still more nostalgia to be tapped from the "Greed is Good" decade, as several publishers are working on comics based on once-hot '80s toy and comic properties. We polled retailers on which ones they feel will be bitchin'-gnarly to order, and which ones will gag them with a spoon, all rated with a calibrated Reaganometer.

ROBOTECH (Wildstorm, out now)

Written by Tommy Yune and Jay Faerber with art by Long Vo and Udon, this new *Robotech* six-issue mini-series has fans of piloted robots drooling. "That book's going to do very well," says Mike Johnson, manager of Golden Apple in Los Angeles. "You've already got the built-in fanbase, plus all the Japanese tourists I get in here are going to want it."

GIPPER SCALE:

VOLTRON (Devil's Due/Image, due in May 2003)

For another one of those wildly popular giant robots, the Defender of the Universe doesn't get much respect. "There's not as much interest in *Voltron*, so it probably won't do as well as the others," says Johnson. "I'm looking at all four to sell well, but *Voltron* will be the least of the best."

GIPPER SCALE:

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (Dreamwave, due in April 2003)

Dreamwave, the studio that brought you *Transformers: G1*, the first of the '80s chart-toppers, is slated to take on the Heroes in a Half-Shell. "The current [Mirage] TMNT series sells okay, but not like *Thundercats* or *Transformers*," says Josh Roberts, manager of Caveman in Springfield, Mo. "The Turtles will always sell because they've always had a loyal following. It's just that that following is more of a cult thing."

GIPPER SCALE:

THUNDERCATS/ BATTLE OF THE PLANETS (Wildstorm/Top Cow, due in March 2003)

This improbable pairing of two of the heaviest hitters in '80s comics should make fanboys sputter as retailers gear up up for what looks to be the biggest '80s book of 2003's first quarter. "This book will easily be the hottest of the four," says Alan Giroux, manager of All About Books & Comics in Phoenix, Ariz. "I know the art is going to look awesome, but the real draw is it's going to have a very cool 'Worlds at War' feel."

GIPPER SCALE:

Who says the comic market for all things '80s may go belly-up at any time? The Gipper Scale doesn't lie, as former '80s punks are still eager to relive their childhood through new comics. So how much longer do we have to wait until Adam Ant, Strawberry Shortcake and G. Gordon Gecko get their own books? ■ **JIM AREHART**

COW USES THE FORCE

Creators Sign on for Exclusive Online Books

Top Cow has joined forces—Dynamic Forces, that is. A series of five Top Cow one-shots are being offered exclusively through the Dynamic Forces website (**www.dynamicforces.com**), a deal which started with December 2002's *The Darkness* by fan-favorite creators Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee.

Each 12-to-16-page book is limited to 10,000 copies, with 5,000 each of two alternate covers, selling for $5 apiece.

Upcoming books are still being worked on, but the tentative schedule consists of *Witchblade* in January, *Tomb Raider* (by Geoff Johns and Mark Texeira) and *Fathom* in February and *Battle of the Planets* (by Mark Millar and John Cassaday) in March. As of press time, the *Fathom* and *Witchblade* creative teams were still tentative, but Millar is said to be writing *Witchblade* and Peter Milligan is attached to *Fathom*.

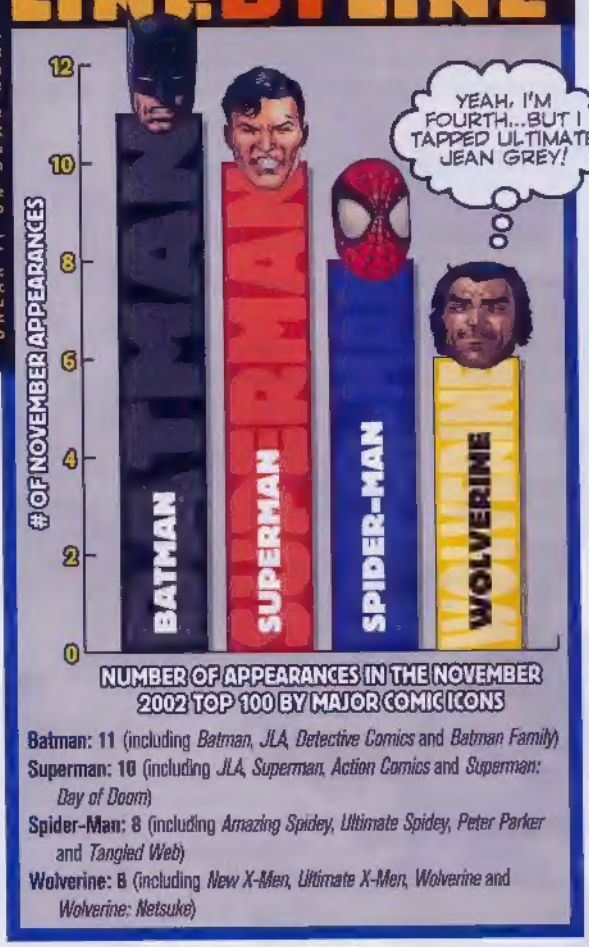
"This is a one-time licensing deal we set up with Top Cow," says DF President Nick Barrucci. "We wanted to create some very cool products that would be really limited. We wanted the best creators. We knew nobody could get a guy like Millar, or the any of the others, for another ongoing because of his full schedule, but we were able to get him for a small side project like this."

The comics will not be Elseworlds-ish tales, but rather will have impacts in the pages of these characters' regular titles. "The books are all one-shot stories," says Top Cow President Matt Hawkins. "But they do generally fall into regular continuity, a lot like #1/2 issues."

Does Dynamic Forces plan to produce exclusive comics with other companies? "Right now we've got some proposals out there," says Barrucci. "We're pursuing options to do this sort of thing with other publishers." ■ JA

LINE BY LINE

BREAK IT ON DOWN NOW!



NUMBER OF APPEARANCES IN THE NOVEMBER 2002 TOP 100 BY MAJOR COMIC ICONS

Batman: 11 (including *Batman, JLA, Detective Comics* and *Batman Family*)
Superman: 10 (including *JLA, Superman, Action Comics* and *Superman: Day of Doom*)
Spider-Man: 8 (including *Amazing Spidey, Ultimate Spidey, Peter Parker* and *Tangled Web*)
Wolverine: 8 (including *New X-Men, Ultimate X-Men, Wolverine* and *Wolverine: Netsuke*)

UPS & DOWNS

MOVERS AND SHAKERS IN THE INDUSTRY

UP CROSSGEN WHEELIN' AND DEALIN' Not content resting on its laurels, CrossGen is offering a money-back guaranty on three high-profile issues in January: *The Crossovers* #1, the *Brath Prequel* and *Crux* #22 (featuring a new direction by writer Chuck Dixon). If readers are unsatisfied, they can return the comics to the company within 60 days for a full refund.

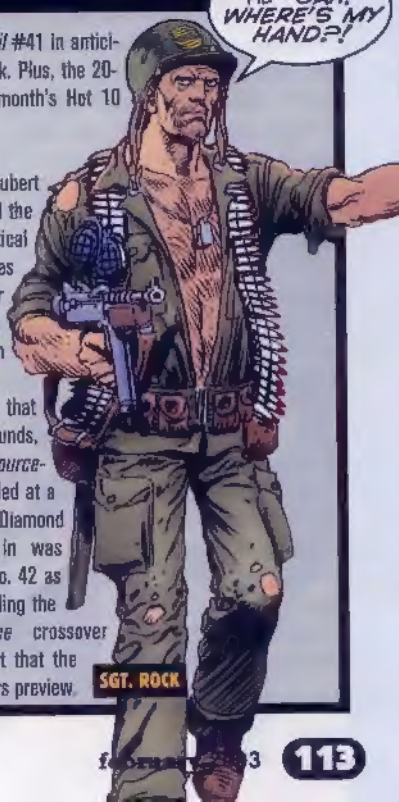
UP IDEA + DESIGN WORKS Not only is the first issue of *30 Days of Night* hitting up to $100 online, but the fledgling publisher will roll out the *30 Days* trade in January. Other IDW titles such as *Popbot* and *Lurid*, while not performing on *30 Days* levels, have been small press success stories as well.

DOWN SUPERGIRL The highly touted return of the original Supergirl propelled *Supergirl* #75 to a No. 88 sales slot in October, but the follow-up issue fell back 22 slots. However, since #75 ended on a cliffhanger (and was practically a sell-out), expect issue #76 to be an underordered back-market beauty.

UP DAREDEVIL *Daredevil: The Target* #1 and *Ultimate Daredevil & Elektra* #1 both sold like Hell's Kitchen hotcakes, while January sees the release of the 25-cent *Daredevil* #41 in anticipation of the upcoming DD flick. Plus, the 20-year-old *DD* #168 is in this month's Hot 10 Comics! (See page 116.)

UP KUBERT WAR BOOKS Thanks to the recent Joe Kubert profile right here in *Wizard* and the current military-centered political climate, Kubert-penciled issues of books like *Sgt. Rock* and *Our Fighting Forces* are seeing more market action than an Allied forces-flanked rampart.

UP SOURCEBOOKS Proving that '80s mania truly knows no bounds, Wildstorm/DC's *Thundercats Sourcebook* (yes, a sourcebook!) landed at a thunderific No. 34 slot on the Diamond Top 100. Also weighing in was *JLA/JSA Secret Files* #1 at No. 42 as fans bask in the heat surrounding the *JLA/JSA: Virtue and Vice* crossover hardcover; it also doesn't hurt that the *Secret Files* has a JLA/Avengers preview.



HOT 10 comics

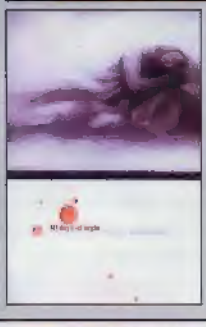
***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 BATMAN #608

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTISTS: Jim Lee & Scott Williams

DC knew they had a hit on their hands with the debut issue of the Loeb/Lee run on *Batman*, so they printed up a whole heap o' copies. Retailers knew their customers would want at least one copy of the sure-to-be-historic first ish, so they went and ordered heaps o' copies. Fans picked up the first ish by the armfuls, causing an almost immediate sell-out. Luckily, DC has a second printing ready to go, this time with an all-new cover by Jim Lee. Don't sleep on this one! **LAST MONTH:** N.R. (Not rated)

2 30 DAYS OF NIGHT #1



WRITER: Steve Niles
ARTIST: Ben Templesmith

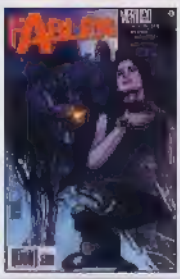
It may have taken two established superstars to knock it out of the No. 1 spot, but *30 Days of Night*–the small-press sensation that's sweeping the nation–is holding steady at No. 2 this month. You've heard this all before: Scarce first printings, second printings just as rare, million-dollar movie in the works, blah, blah, blah. Even with publisher IDW collecting all three issues in a trade (set for release in January), the revered first issue looks to cling tightly to its $30 value. **LAST MONTH:** 1

3 Y–THE LAST MAN #1

WRITER: Brian K. Vaughan
ARTISTS: Pia Guerra & Jose Marzan

Sales of Vertigo's *Y–The Last Man* are going through the roof–and it's not just the first issue, folks; it's EVERY issue! Retailers are STILL ordering low, leading to several issues –especially the first ish–becoming insanely scarce. These days, you're lucky to find a copy of #1 for any less than $10, so start pinching those pennies, fanboys! **LAST MONTH:** 3

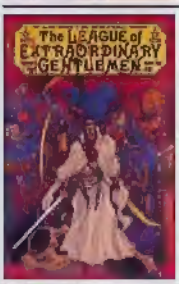
4 FABLES #1



WRITER: Bill Willingham
ARTISTS: Lan Medina & Steve Leialoha

It took last month off, but the premiere issue of Vertigo's other white-hot series, *Fables*, makes its way back onto the Hot 10 list with a bullet, landing at No. 4. While copies of issue #1 have become about as rare as magic beans, it's the gritty Alex Maleev cover that seems to be the version collectors are hunting down. **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

5 LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN VOL. 2 #1



WRITER: Alan Moore
ARTIST: Kevin O'Neill

More comic readers are discovering that this Alan Moore fella writes a damn good funnybook. Everyone waited for the first League mini to be collected, but not so with *Vol. 2*, as Moore fans are following the classic lit. crew. Plus, that major motion picture they're filming in Prague can't hurt. **LAST MONTH:** 5

6 ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #2

WRITER: Brian Michael Bendis
ARTISTS: Mark Bagley & Art Thibert

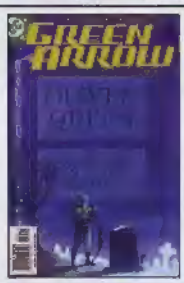
When a month goes by without an *Ultimate Spider-Man* back ish on the list, the Wizard staff starts to feel all empty and incomplete inside. Thanks to the red-hot first part of the return of the Green Goblin storyarc, *Ultimate Spidey* cracks the Hot 10 after taking a month off. Now we feel whole and complete (aw, who are we kidding; we're miserable...). **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

7 DAREDEVIL #168

WRITER: Frank Miller
ARTISTS: Frank Miller & Klaus Janson

What the holy heck is going on here? Last month we saw a classic DD issue sneak its way into the Hot 10 list (#181), and now it's yet another classic ish, this one the first appearance of Elektra. Are you guys just now finding out that this book was good long before Bendis and Maleev took it over? Or is it that "Daredevil" movie that comes out in February? **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

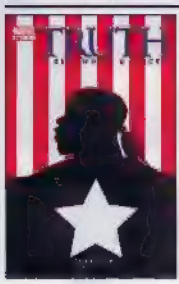
8 GREEN ARROW #16



WRITER: Brad Meltzer
ARTISTS: Phil Hester & Ande Park

Go on, admit it–you figured that once the almighty Kevin Smith left DC's Emerald Archer, fans would drop the title like a bad habit. Now you're acting all, "No way man, I knew Brad Meltzer's run would kick ass," but we're like, "Yeah right, man," and you're like, "No dude, I'm serious." You get the idea: Meltzer+*Green Arrow*+debut issue=one hot tamale. **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

9 TRUTH #1



WRITER: Robert Morales
ARTIST: Kyle Baker

If there's one thing that sells in any entertainment medium, it's controversy, and Marvel's retelling of Captain America's origin has that a-plenty. Here's the scoop: Retailers under-ordered the first issue, and since this book is considered Marvel's next *Origin*, collectors are going to be all over this one like Anna Nicole Smith at an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet. **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

10 SHONEN JUMP #1

WRITERS: Various
ARTISTS: Various

Fans are really into this Japanese import anthology, and understandably so since the Japanese are on the cutting-edge of comics and–gotcha! Actually, it's the exclusive Yu-Gi-Oh! trading card packaged with each issue that has collectors buying up copies long before little kids who actually enjoy the Japanese cartoon can get one of their own. **LAST MONTH:** N.R.

THE HOT SEAT

This Month Featuring:

MICHAEL ROSENBAUM

STAR OF WB'S "SMALLVILLE" SERIES

WIZARD: Playing **Lex Luthor** on "Smallville" must be kind of cool, right? You could use the line, "I'm not a billionaire but I play one on TV," to pick up girls, huh?

ROSENBAUM: I've never used that line.

Well, you should think about it, bro.

I'll consider it.

Who's the best Lex Luthor actor? You, [movie Luthor] **Gene Hackman** or [TV's "Lois & Clark" Luthor] John Shea?

I'm the best young Lex Luthor, period, just because there is no other Lex Luthor. I've never seen John Shea's work. I have to be honest with you. Can you believe that?

No, I can't! It's *shocking*! I'm *flabbergasted*! So, what's a tougher assignment for a role: shaving your head, or dressing as a woman like you did for "Sorority Boys"?

Shaving my head. Dressing up like a woman is kind of nothing to me now. It's kind of old hat. I just did two movies in drag, and I dressed up in drag in college for talent shows and things like that and back in grade school.

Ever do private parties? 'Cause I got a C-note and some free time.

[*Laughs*] Hold on, what?

Never mind, sweet cheeks. I bet you get a lot of groupies being on a show like "Smallville" though, right?

You know, fans are out there. There are a lot of great fans who have big hearts and really just embrace my character and really like me. And there are fans who send portraits of themselves and portraits of their family and what they'd like to do to me behind closed doors. It goes a little far...

Maybe get you in drag?

What's with you and drag? I was a crazed fan once, though. I love ["Hannibal" actor] Gary Oldman. And then I met him and I was like, 'Oh, hey. Gary, how are you? I love your work.' I felt like a dork.

Speaking of dorks, who's your favorite superhero?

I always loved Batman. Batman's got that brooding attitude, you know? He's really cool on the **"Justice League"** animated series; I only get to do the voice of the Flash, though.

What are the chances of seeing you in the **Lex Luthor battle armor** from the cartoon?

It won't happen.

Are you sure? It could be a good look for you.

Not in this lifetime.

■ MIKE COTTON

GENE HACKMAN AS LEX LUTHOR

JUSTICE LEAGUE

MICHAEL ALSO VOICES THE FLASH IN "JUSTICE LEAGUE."

LEX LUTHOR IN BATTLE ARMOR

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